

The Beat Within

A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside



Volume 9.15



"Fog And Wind Covering The Life Of A Man"

Art By Dat Nguyen



Editor's Note

Hey Beat readers, it's always our pleasure to present to you yet another magnificent issue of writing and art from the inside. In this issue we have a heavy dose from our friends in the Southwest, too, so look out for Maricopa County, Arizona! Before we go off with our typical ed note ramble, allow us to say thank you to all you devoted writers, artists and readers who faithfully utilize The Beat Within . . . You all know what time it is.

So come this Thursday, we will be venturing back into the juvenile facility that suspended our program for two weeks due to immature young gangbangers who used our publication to hate on one another. You know we can't wait to get back into the Hall to share our two cents of frustration with you. Really, is our passion and love for this work gonna stop further bull from reoccurring? Probably not, but we'll take our position with you all and see if it makes a difference, maybe for a few. Nevertheless, we will be glad to get back at you!

Hey, how 'bout this summer weather we've been having? Can you appreciate these fine April days? Hope so. Too bad many of you rarely get a glimpse of the bright blue skies, or the piercing heat from the sun beaming on the back of your head while you stroll down the street. What will it take for you to cherish the simple things that come with freedom, (given that you will get your freedom back sometime down the line)?

We at The Beat truly cannot imagine what it would be like to have our freedom taken away right from under our eyes. Many of you have painted very moving portraits, and written pieces/letters explaining your predicament and the painfully wrong choices that have given you from two years in the CYA to four years in the CDC, or 10 years, 20 years, and for some . . . 99 years to life sentences, if not death row.

Out of these painful letters, many of you have clearly described how, despite the sentence you have been handed, you have found hope in yourself to make the best out of a bad sentence/period. Most of you have a determination to make it by educating yourself, finding God, and creating a rigorous daily program that will keep you active, healthy, and busy, and through all of this, the hope that one day your appeal will be heard and you'll get the good news that your sentence has been reduced and you're going home. Or, that your day to be paroled back into the community has finally arrived.

As for those of you who have a date, we are always encouraged when you have a game plan to live righteously upon your return home. Having a game plan and support, and making the choice not to go back to your old ways is a huge step in beating the system.

Beating the system is not easy; should you fall, it is a must to rebound, pick yourself up by the bootstraps and try again. Nevering give up on yourself is key, no matter how many times you fall from grace.

Speaking of beating the system, in our last ed note we mentioned our role at the San Francisco Public Defender's Juvenile Justice Summit on April 21st, titled, "Raising Up Our Youth, Building Safer Communities," which was held at the SF Public Library's Koret Auditorium. This daylong affair was well attended by the converted, if you know what we mean. We were a part of the first panel, which was called, "Juvenile Advocacy: Thinking Outside The Box." We were a part of six-panelist discussion that included several specialty juvenile attorneys in the field, a local youth advocate and a mental health doctor. During our ten minutes, we were asked about solutions. Can you believe it? We kept it real when we quickly spoke of our paper/program, and we then segued into stating that it all starts with being consistent in people's lives, and not so much judging the young person/people, but listening, yes, listening, to the young people, questioning the young people, and knowing, bottom line, the outcome is that the young people will ultimately have to make their own decisions on how they want to live their lives . . . A life of incarceration or a life living legit in the free world. This has been our program from the beginning (1996), as we give our writers the outlet to tell their stories, without judgment, using whatever format feels most comfortable.

Besides The Beat being on the morning panel, during the luncheon presentation, our very own Gellé Tolbert and Will Roy rattled and moved the crowd with their poignant spoken-word performances, as they read their latest poems to a full house. From the jailhouse to Koret Auditorium — a huge step for both talented teachers.

Jeff Adachi, head Public Defender, and the lead organizer of the event, even opened up the program by reading a quote from a recent Beat. Plus, we brought several hundred Beats to the event, and every single one was taken. Yes indeed, a sizzling-hot paper!

What will come out of the event?? Only time will tell . . . Nevertheless, you may be thinking, what else was discussed at this daylong event? Well, they had a presentation of various youth advocate professionals discussing the young ladies in the hall, entitled, "Serving Our Sisters." The last panel was titled,

"Creating An Action Plan," and it even featured our very own Spiritual Advisor, Jack Jacqua. We're very sure he kept it real. Isn't that Jack's motto!?

All right readers, how 'bout the topics that were discussed leading up to the writing in this issue?! Well, here we go. The first topic was the very popular, "Passed Me By — As you sit in your cell or on your bunk, you have time to think about and reflect on your life, yet the world on the outs keeps on turning. So, what do you think you've missed out on? What passed you by? Was it your family? Was it the prom? Was it a childhood? Was it a dream? Was it an opportunity or chance? Was it graduating on stage in high school? Do you think you can ever get back some of the things that seem to have passed you by? Why or why not?

And, are you missing out on anything while you're currently in Juvenile Hall? Now tell us, what's passed you by?"

This topic produced great discussions in our workshops, as did the following: "Letter To A Child — As you all know, a police officer was shot and killed in San Francisco a few days ago. One fact jumped out at us as we read about this latest act of violence: the officer left behind a 3-year-old daughter, as well as a wife who will have to raise her child without a father.

At the same time, we know that many, many young fathers are killed in the ghetto 'hoods of cities all over America, from San Francisco to New York, every day. For example, last week a young man who described himself as a gangster from Richmond was murdered, leaving behind his own three-year-old daughter.

We would like you to write a letter to both of these children that explains why their fathers were killed. We want these letters to help the victims' daughters understand, when they are older, why this happened to their pops.

Would your explanation to the daughter of the police officer be different from your explanation to the daughter of the gangster? Would you have different words of comfort for each of them, or would your message be the same?

So step up, and try to make two children understand the killings of their fathers."

Like we said, many shared their views on this topic, some supportive of the children, all children who lose family members due to violence, while others truly had a problem with the murdered cop getting all this attention, feeling that death happens often in the 'hood, but because it was a police officer, it received special attention. With that said, very few wrote on it. Too bad.

Lastly, we had the simple, yet inspiring, writing topic, "When I look out my window, I wish . . ."

OK, contest writers, we hope your pencils are sharpened, and your creative juices are flowing, because here's our tenth editorial-note writing contest. We want to know your all time favorite movie and why. We are curious as to why this movie moves you so much. Tell us how it relates to you. Tell the readers about a time, maybe the first time, you saw this movie. We want the inviting details as to why this movie will always have an important place on your movie shelf/heart. Be creative when painting the picture of this special, special movie.

With this said, the deadline for contest submissions is July 31, 2004. We will award four prizes/money orders for our favorite pieces. Our top prize is a \$100 money order for first place. Followed by a \$50 money order for second place, and for third and fourth place, \$25 money orders. With this said, good luck writers in attempting to create a moving and telling piece about your all time favorite movie. We encourage all of you editor's note readers to take this topic on!

Don't forget, in issue 9.17, we will announce our four favorite 9th ed note contest pieces. Good luck writers!

As for standup writers, let's take a moment to congratulate this week's POW (Piece of The Week) winners! They are in no particular order Turning Eighteen, No One, and Dion from the 150 Crew. From the southwest we have Mike from Maricopa county in Arizona. Crossing the Golden Gate Bridge and out of Marin county we have Guera and The Antichrist stepping up big. Returning to the city by the bay we have Andrey out of SF/YGC. Thank you POW writers.

Hey Beat readers, no ed note would be complete without us paying respects with an issue-ending dedication. So let's dedicate this issue to our long-time colleague, Allan Tinker, who for many years has played a very important role in leading workshops, editing and responding with his very respectful, very insightful, "From The Beats." Allan has been a go-to colleague for many years now. His love and heart for this work speaks volumes. If you have worked with Allan in the past, you know what we're talking about. These days you can find Allan in 150 (Camp Sweeney and various units in the 150 Hall.) He has led workshops in Santa Clara and in SF/YGC as well, but these days he truly calls 150 his home for leading workshops. Right on Allan for the love. We all are feeling your vibe every week, even those of us who do not know you. You're beautiful, man!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, Canon Barcus Community Center, San Mateo, Napa, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Riker's Island in New York City, Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden Truth in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415)503-4170 or check us out at

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Letter To The Editor

To The Beat

Hey Beat, I felt really disrespected from last week's issue I received. You always have negative things to say about my pieces. All my pieces are positive and you make them seem negative. You gotta read between the lines. It seem like you judge a book by its cover. You remind me of cops and PO's.

You said that "praying is another way of saying I wish." I felt really disrespected by that. You need to start doing your job right and stop criticizing people. You're supposed to be helping us, not putting us down.

You shouldn't ever disrespect someone's religion. So just take time to read my pieces a little bit closer next time.

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're sorry if you felt disrespected in any way because that wasn't our intention. We just want you to realize that if you sit there and pray and keep on doing the same things expecting a different result — it ain't gonna work. "God helps those who helps themselves" — an old saying. You have to take action by changing your actions; God can only guide you. In no way are we putting you down, we just want you to think. Maybe we can help each other do a better job of reading between the lines.



I Wish . . .

When I look out my window, I wish I wasn't in this damn place, man. Every day I wake up in a box and know this is not the place for me. Jail ain't no place for anybody. Everybody talks about kids being wild and people coming out of jail are wild, but if they were forced to do some time — they will know why.

All day we stay locked up in our cell until someone comes with the keys and unlocks yo' door and says, "come on out." Humans don't belong in cages, all it does is build more and more frustration. We can't really do too much in here as far as taking our frustration out, or we will just end up with more time on top of the time we already have. So when we get out, we still have the frustration and someone might say or do the wrong thing and we just go off.

They say we are wild; we need more control. But what most people probably don't understand is that we weren't always like this. We are what we were influenced by and most of all we're influenced by all the wrong things: drugs, guns, nice cars, clothes, money, robbin', stealin', killin'.

A child is the most precious and vulnerable thing in this world. You can tell a child something and he can still remember it before he dies when he is all grown up.

When I look out my window, I wish people would understand that being wild is all we know. When I look out my window I wish I wouldn't have got caught. I was man enough to do the crime, so I'm man enough to do the time. When I look out my window I wish people would teach to their children that being wild and a thug is getting played out. All the thugs either end up dead, in the pen', strung-out on the drugs, or a bum.

Only a few smart ones make it off the streets or make big money from the streets.

When I look out my window, I wish I can go home to my baby momma and help her through her pregnancy. When I look out my window I wish she has a healthy baby. I wish; I hope we can be better parents than mines are. I have good healthy strong parents, but back then all they showed me was guns, drugs, cars, clothes and females. So that's all I know. When I look out my window . . .

-Dion, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Excellent writing and excellent thinking. If you were to say, "that's all I know" when it comes down to everything, you'd be like a baby still. A child has to grow and learn new things. You had to learn to tie your shoe. You didn't say, "I don't know how to tie my shoe so I'm going to wear Velcro straps for the rest of my life." You still have the chance to learn, so jump on the learning train. Like Nas says in that song, "I Know I Can" — "you don't wanna be my age and can't read or write." The more you know — the more you grow. Now, what do you want to teach your child? How will you raise your kid differently than your family raised you?



**When I look out my window,
I wish I can go home to my
baby momma and help her
through her pregnancy.**

Remember

baby do you remember
when we first knew each other
when we was six years old
do you remember
when you told me
you don't like me
do you remember
when we first started
hanging out with each other
do you remember
when you liked me
and I liked you
i know you do remember
when we went out the first time
do you remember
when i told you i love you
do you remember
when your mom died
and i was right there for you
do you remember
when I told you i will always
love you forever and more
and do you remember
when we first had that kiss
and you told me you love me for life
remember that time
when i came to your family's thanksgiving
and i ate all of the pie and stuff
remember when you kissed
your ex-boyfriend and i said
i forgive you — that was a bad day
i know you remember
when i was locked up
and you wrote me like every day
and every letter you sent me said
i love you always and forever
do you know what i remember baby
i remember when i was
reading a book in my cell
and a letter came from you
it said baby i can't be with you no more
because this is not going to work anymore
my heart just dropped
like a ton of rocks
you know what
that's something to remember
peace —

-No One, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel the love and heartbreak in your poem, and we know that the pain of lost love is still strong. Your poem represents love's betrayal, but who betrayed whom? Who kept sending you back to a locked room, leaving her outside filled with loneliness and gloom as she walked in the sun to a classroom where everyone else is having fun? We're sorry it ended, but you need to remember what keeps bringing you back here — slanging, grinding, cutting, partying, drinking, drugging, banging, thugging? Only you know the cause, but whatever it is, you need to put it on pause, rewind and eject. 'Cause love, too, requires respect!



Make Mama Proud

In elementary school I used crayons, beads and chalk
I learned how to count money before I could read and talk
Mama had told me, "Son, you need to shine"
I couldn't stand at the back; I had to lead the line
I used to make good grades, but I talked in class
In middle school I was cute when I walked in class
If I ran errands I taught the class
But what I didn't know I was about to ask
Just because I played ball and got easy grades
And when I turned thirteen I even got fades
Everybody went Air Max, Re's, and J's
But all my parents cared about was B's and A's
In high school I pick up my pen and pad
I had dreams about pulling up in a Benz or a Jag
I had to get on my own, I can't depend on dad
I had to grow up to fast, but then I am glad
Because the stuff I know now I wouldn't believe
The main goal that I set I wouldn't achieve
I probably would be locked up and running the streets
I probably would be a drop out with rotten teeth
I'd probably be mopping trying to earn a dollar
I'd probably be in the 'hood selling sherm or powder
But instead I am making bread legal, though
Going to church and staying away from evil dough
You only got one life, better do what you can
'Cause when you turn thirteen you are a man
God, I can't be broke so I am going to rock the crowd
It's up to me, I got to make my mama proud
There is a place called heaven
There is a place called hell
There is a place called freedom
There is a place called jail
If you go to jail they are going to treat you bad
Take your freedom and manhood, and then beat you bad
So I am staying out of trouble and I am chasing my dream
I know you see your little boy on the TV screen
I am blowin' up, your little boy is making it happen
I ain't selling dope mama, I am making it rappin'
So when you go to sleep at night you know that I am safe
'Cause in the project, every day somebody catch a case
Like yesterday my friend went to jail
And he isn't coming home until he's 57
He's nineteen — Damn! — so you do the math
I got smart man, I chose to rap
So when I grow up my kids can have a good life
That's all I wrote ya'll, have a good night
I've got to make my mama proud...
I've got to make my mama proud...
I ain't selling dope, I'm making it rapping.

Dedicated to the best mom, Charmi
Love, your son Mike

-Mike, Maricopa Durango, Arizona

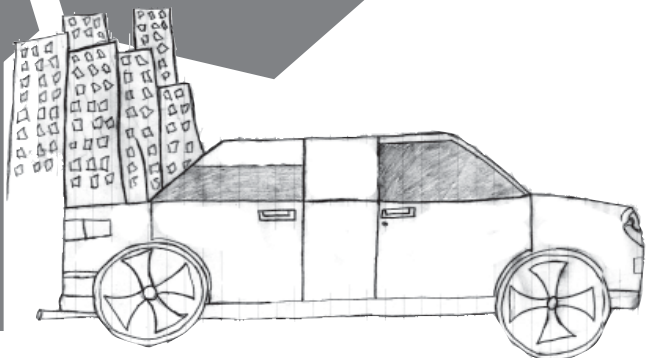
From The Beat: You speak like a wise man looking back on how you made it through hard times. You've clearly got talent, but as you probably know, the rap game is a fickle business, and as often as not, it's got very little to do with talent. How can you rap your way to the top? If it's not possible, what else do you have that you can use to help pull you from the 'hood life that's taken so many of your folk down? What's it going to take to get to where you want to get from where you're at now? What are the small sacrifices you're going to have to make on the daily to stay free? How are you going to define "blowing up"? Is it going to be enough to be able to hold it down in school and struggle for an honest buck to keep you going, or is your shine going to require the kind of big bills that so few can get?

Childhood Memories

(Kenny = Step dad)
Packing up my beads
I'm running away
Slapped my mom
In her face
And took off on my bike
Screaming for life
A backpack on my back
Full of beads and toys
Mom running after me
Kenny running after her
She grabbed my backpack
And ripped me off my bike
Dragged me to the house
And grounded me for life
She put me in my room
Kenny took out a broom
He whooped her ass
She ran to shut my door
He grabbed her hair
To drag her across the floor
I laid on my bed
And started to cry
I cried so much
My eyes became dry
My mom would take
Me away for a week
Then we'd go back to that geek
He'd be sweet for some time
Then would whoop her ass
Again
Now he's sober
And people call him "Ken"
He lives in Placerville
And has no thoughts to kill
He never hit me
He's loved me since he met me
Our love in the family
Was as bitter as tea
He's a changed man, now
And I talk to him on the phone
He says now that I'm back in his life
He's not so alone.

-Guera, Marin

From The Beat: It's the first time you've really written about your family. It's good that your step-dad seems to have changed toward your mother. Are they still together? Do you believe that he has honestly changed? Could you forgive him for his past doings? Why or why not?





Prozac

This Prozac chews holes in my brain
Leaving black gaping spaces
Of nothingness
Dissolving memory capacity
I don't know what I ate for lunch
At four times the normal loss
There are no more feelings
When there's an adverse affect
I'm a danger to myself
There were times that something really horrible
happened
I'd sometimes contemplate death
Every moment a breath escapes my tear-strained lips
Numbness makes me want to feel some form of pain
It has turned into an obsession
You know I'm doped up
'Cause when you talk to me
I'm unable to really listen
I hear you but the words don't register
They just dissolve in these black holes
Where my brain used to be

-The Antichrist, Marin

From The Beat: You've written another brilliant poem; as amazing as it is troubling. We have some questions; can you control obsessing about wanting to feel pain? Do you want to feel pain because you think pain is better than feeling dead inside? Please talk to your psychiatric social worker or to a doctor, to see what you should do about anxiety or depression. Meanwhile, do you know why you're depressed? What kind of help do you want and/or need?

**People kill because that
is the ugly nature of
the human race, and
most people justify it if
it is used to deal with
dangerous criminals.**

Real Life Is Cruel

I hate to be cruel, but that's life. And I personally hate even the thought of killing another human being.

Even the death penalty, no matter who the convict, is a cruel way to deal with things. People use the death penalty as a reason for their demented satisfaction. People kill because that is the ugly nature of the human race, and most people justify it if it is used to deal with dangerous criminals.

A sixteen year-old kid stole a car and was involved in a car chase. When he was boxed in, he got nervous backed into one of the cop cars and was shot and killed. Just for that.

However, there are little people who understand how serious killing someone is, and there is little they can do to prevent it. Life is hard for both cops and criminals, but that's no reason to stop living it, instead to fight against these issues, even when all hope is lost.

-Andrey B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Good message being sent here, you are right anything can happen, and we need to organize to get rid of the senseless violence. What do you think it will take for people to slow down the violence in the streets? Why do you think there is so much violence going on? Do you see a difference between the killing that goes down on the streets, and the killing the state engages in when the police shoot down unarmed citizens, or when the state executes a fellow citizen?

Missing Out On My Whole Life

This is a very important time in my life. For one, because I'm just now turning eighteen and I didn't get to graduate. I also have a child on the way and I'm missing my girlfriend's pregnancy.

I say this is a very important time in my life because I'm becoming a man and when I get out of here, I will be on my own with nobody to take care of me. I'm missing out on my whole life because it's really just begun, and I'm not being able to enjoy it or even start it. I'm not able to take care of my girl or help my mom or finish school all because of this messed up place. I'm not really worried about missing out on having too much fun, but at the same time, I am. But that's not what I'm worried about or mad about.

What I'm missing is being able to take my girl to the prom and watch her stomach grow is what's really important and that I'm missing. Becoming a man and working every day to feed my family. I'm also not there to watch my sister, and she has gotten a lot bigger since I've been in here.

One of the biggest things I'm missing out on is my grandmother always wanted to see me walk that stage and get that diploma. Also you can't go anywhere in life if you don't graduate from high school. Sometimes GED's don't really help. A diploma is a big part of your life, especially when you have a child.

-Turning Eighteen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're missing out on a lot. But eighteen is still young. What plans do you have for the future? You may have missed out on some very important things, but you have a sister, a girlfriend and a baby on the way. You have a future. How will you spend it? How can you make sure nothing else passes you by?





Convicted In The Womb

I was born a convicted infant
Pops was on the bottle
Moms was out sniffin'
Came home, the couch and TV was missin'
So I had to make my money
Cookin' dope in the kitchen
Makin' my cash
While moms was takin' a blast
And the only time my dad was my father
Is when he was whoopin' my ass
Plus when pops was out robbin and workin'
Moms was drinkin', sobbin' and snortin'
Stealin' my lunch money
'Cause her high was more important
New shoes? Pops couldn't afford it
So I had to hustle
For my new Air Jordans...
(not done, out of time sorry)

-Byron B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We cannot imagine having to grow up in the conditions you describe so well in this very tight poem. Even if you didn't have time to finish it, we feel every word you put down. Having survived what no child should have to survive, how do you want to live your life as an adult? How will your unhappy childhood experiences make you a better father, husband, human being?

Watching Drug Abuse

Something that changed me in a way was drug abuse. I could watch people be gon' off whatever they were on and be like, "Could that be me?" I smoke weed and popped a couple of pills, but nothing heavy.

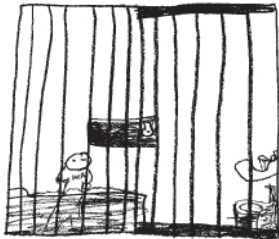
A lot of my family used that stuff. My uncle used to smoke crack, my dad sold crack and did it, my mom used to be off the powder and my sister sold crack and X and did them. I always refused to do it because that isn't me.

I never did it because it kinda scared me. You hear so many stories how someone is hooked on and it's hard to get off. It scares me because I could like it too. It makes you think about why so many individuals use it, but at the same time it's like, why not? It's hard when ya homie tries to get you to do it because you don't want him to think you're a punk.

It's just personal values. There are lines that aren't supposed to be crossed. I cross a lot of them, but there are lines you can't bring myself to cross.

-Danny, Virginia

From The Beat: This is powerful writing. You are a powerful person. You are not only smart but also intelligent because you learn from what you know and what you've seen. You are smart not to get into the whole drug thang because your family has a history of addiction. Break this tradition. You are not a punk at all, in fact, you are a courageous person to be doing something different than so many of your friends and family members. Look at the parts of your life that you want different and work on them, and continue being strong and intelligent.



Losing My Family Members

I started to change when I lost one of my family members. It was hard for me because she was very close to me. And it was like when I lost her, my family just started to break apart. When she was here, the family was always together having fun with one another — not now

When you ask half of my friends, they would tell you that I always get into fights just over crazy things. But then I started to think about all the good things that I did do in the past with her, and said to myself that all this needs to stop. So I started to change little by little, but I still got locked up and that was not good at all.

I've been locked up two times up state, but now I see the light and I'm going to change myself this time. I see the light now and I know that I'm the person that can help myself, and anyone else that has been going through the same stuff that I have — just keep your head up.

-Big Bill, Virginia

From The Beat: Losing a family member has broken up many families. It's hard to deal with grief and loss if no one is willing to get help or talk about it. It's sooo hard to talk about. You have courage to write about this and we commend you. It's important to process the sadness and how her death affected your life and your family. We can tell that you realized that she would want everyone to be happy and learn from all this, not destroy the family. Hold memories of her close to your heart and let them remind you of how you want to live a happy life — in her memory. Start by looking at what got you locked up and how you can prevent this from happening again. Ask for some support this time from the community and your family, and be prepared to be patient and work hard.

To Be A Better Person

When I am in my room in Juvenile Hall, I think about myself — how I want to change to be a better person.

I want my little sister and little brother to look up to me as a big brother who is smart and who can teach them both the goods and the bads in life.

When I am in my room, I also think 'bout my family and friends. I think about funny things that I seen and heard before. I also daydream about if I was a big professional actor!

I also dream about how I would love my life to be and how my family's life should be, too. I want me and my mom, sisters, and brother to have a great, joyful life! I would like us all to be happy and be able to make dreams come true in life.

To me, life is hard. My mother is doing good for herself. She's going to school to be a doctor's biller, or something like that. I think about other things, but I don't want to talk about them right now.

-Mark, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have wonderful dreams and aspirations, and a great heart full of love for your family. Change, they say, is an inside job; meaning — the change has to start inside you if you want any change in your circumstances to be more than momentary. That's why those who "pimp the system" but don't change their hearts and minds, keep coming back. You've made the decision to change, and that's where it all starts!

Dear Gangsta's Daughter

Dear Gangsta's Daughter,

I'm sorry your dad passed away. Right now you are probably not old enough to understand why he was killed. Things he did was putting him at risk of getting arrested or killed. The loss you suffered was a hard one. He most likely loved you more than anything in the world, but it isn't my place to say if he did or didn't.

I can't relate to you about you losing your dad to death. I can relate to not having one. You have had more of a dad than me. You knew your dad for a while. I've never seen mine. You might not feel like you're lucky to have had a dad for the time that you did and I don't expect you to.

-Ryan, Marin

From The Beat: What a lovely, thoughtful, sad letter you wrote to this child that you don't even know. You really try to understand what she might be going through. Do you have the same heart for the daughter of the policeman who was killed? He put himself out there and risked his life for his job.



This Solitude Of My Mind

This solitude of my mind,
Taught me how to wine and dine,
Myself,
Without wanting or needing anything,
From anyone else.
My heart's sullen,
Is growing greater by the day,
Wishing time would fly,
And go straight to the month of May.
Now I feel like the system is going crazy,
I'd rather live a solitary life
Because to me,
It's not being in a so-called relationship
Being lazy.
The hand I've been dealt in life is starting to get mainy.
On October 22, I'll be grown,
But leaving the system,
This time is taking too damn long.
I'm looking for success,
But hate being put through the test,
But will always give it my best.
I feel that different cultures of America,
Have been put down
For many years,
Making our mothers and fathers
Shed too many tears.
Put a mug on your face,
But keep an open heart,
Because the game we play can turn cold and dark.
I'm seventeen and a half,
Wit' nobody else
But my own self mask.
I wish my pops was here to see his baby girl
Take on this cold but evil world,
But he can't because his body is six feet deep
With his noble soul looking down on me,
While I'm living my life in the streets,
Making my mind dig deep
So others can see what I peep,
Then maybe my pops will rest peacefully.

-Brittany, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, you really took us on a long journey through your mind. What make you feel like your mind is in solitude? Do you feel like people have a hard time understanding you? Do you feel like you understand others? What will it take for you to get out of the street life and help your dad rest peacefully?

Keep Yo' Head Up, Lil' Mamas

I would tell the daughters the same thing. Although one man was a gangbanger and the other was a policeman, I can't differentiate between the two.

They both lived a dangerous lifestyle. One may be more for the positive, while the other is more for the negative, but they both knew what they were getting into before they got into it.

An old spiritual states, "You live by the sword, you die by the sword." No disrespect to either party. As a matter of fact, my condolences go out to both families, especially the little three-year-olds, because they are the true victims of crime.

-Afro B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Oh, yes, Afro, the children are the true victims. Both will now grow up without fathers. We find your analysis very interesting, that both men lived (and died) by the sword. What advice would you give — to those two little girls, and to every other child you know — about how to live their lives? When you're a father (and we think you'll be a good one), how will you teach your children the values you want them to live by?

I Owe It To My Daughter To Change

A lot of things passed by while I've been locked up, and a lot of things will pass by while I remain locked up. The one I most regret is not seeing my daughter grow up. Now I realize I'm not gonna hear her talk for the first time, see her walk for the first time, see her first tooth come out.

I ain't gonna be able to show her how to tie her shoe laces, and I wanna tell everybody that reads this, I didn't have a father to teach me how to tie my shoe laces, so I know how it feels. I don't want my daughter to feel like I feel a couple of years from now.

But I guess I can't do nothing about it anymore 'cause I already got sentenced to 21 months. So to all you who read this, I say one more time try to change for yourself and the ones you love before it's too late.

-Diablyto B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That little detail about not being able to teach your daughter how to tie her shoelaces really got to us. We hope it gets to some of your peers, too, because it's so real. Diablyto, even though it seems like forever from where you sit, 21 months is less than two years. You will miss a lot in your daughter's development, as you wrote, but you won't miss it all. In fact, you should be home in time to teach her how to tie her shoelaces, as long as you remember the lessons you learned by being away from her. You are still young, Diablyto. You have a long life ahead with your family. Make the most of it. And thank you for this.

...my condolences go out to both
families, especially the little
three-year-olds, because they are
the victims of crime.

Truth

watching the clock
wishing every minute
was a day
to decrease the days
we have to stay
here —

but time passes by
when you're occupied
so i don't pay it
no mind
but i use my time
'cause i'm not getting
caught
in the streets
left behind
blind —
there's a lot of things
to find

in myself
and better ways to deal
with what needs
to be dealt
in different ways
i've felt
i was suffering
harder than anyone else
but we're all human
so i know
i'm not by myself
it all boils down to
this world

is a crazy place
it's got to where
if i had a choice
i would not stay
but i have to say
it's only temporary
if you're trying to move on
and not get dragged down
by past things
that you did wrong
advice to y'all
— stay strong
and believe it
from your heart
because once you try
to move
it's the only way
you'll start

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've been here many days, and with more days to come, it gets to feeling overwhelming to anyone! And while you're not alone, there will be times you feel the need to moan — it's part of the painful process of growing up and moving on. But it's not all pain, and with your gifts — character, intelligence and spirit — you've got a world to gain! You know, you're doing better than you're feeling; 'cause the Tishay we've been seeing is doing more than merely dealing — she's succeeding in proceeding on her way to a brighter day!



It's Not Coming Back

Sittin' in juvi, a lot has passed me by. I have missed a Christmas, a birthday, my girlfriend's birthday, my son's birth, and his first birthday.

There's been a lot that has passed me by, and a lot of it I can't get back. I know I have reason and responsibility to stay outta here, but I guess that I'm a jerk or somethin'.

I been in and out since 2001, and I'm soon to be 18. A lot has passed me by, but I'ma try not to let anything else pass me by. Bein' in juvi ain't coo'. I done let life pass me by and it's not comin' back...

-Rb B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If you stay true to your commitment not to let any more of life pass you by, then maybe your time in here taught you a valuable lesson. Only a part of life has passed you by because you are still young. You have almost all of your life still ahead of you. You're right, you can't bring back the past, but you can use it to guide you to a better future.

In This System

I've been in this system since I was nine years old and still coming back at age seventeen. Everyone thinks this place is fun and games, but it's not. It's addicting 'cause once you come, you always come back for different charges.

Why do you really wanna live a life on the run? Or tryin' to make a point to your homies? You wanna be down, you wanna act like you're hard, you wanna be respected, you wanna call them your family? That ain't the life.

Yeah, that was the life I was leading, but that's the life I'm leaving behind, because no one is gonna be there like you're blood. Family will. The rest just call you "Brother" or "Sister" because they want you to have their back or take a wrap. They'll even want you to give up your life before they take their own.

Then once you're gone, who's gonna miss you? Your family, not your homies. Yeah, they might say they do, but do they really?

-Shorty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Shorty, what do you mean addicting? Is it the lifestyle you're talking about, or the Hall? Do you feel safer in the Hall or on the outs? Now that you realize that your real family is who's going to be there for you, will you change what you do and who you hang with on the outs?

I Wish

I wish I could fly. But what I wish for that is more realistic is that I would have taken another path.

I wish I would've made better decisions. I wish I was out, not even to run amuck in the streets and kick it, but to be with my family and live life the right way.

I wish I could breathe in the fresh air outside.

I'll be out soon to do all these things. Yes, my wishes have come true.

-Nataly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nataly, you'll be out soon. It seems like your experience in the Hall has helped you appreciate the simple things in life. How else has your time in the Hall changed you?

In My Room

Hi, my name is Ella, and when I'm in my room, I think about a lot of stuff. It's like, man, I am really, really young and I should be with my family, and my friends, and in school.

I should not be locked up in here like an animal, and you guys should not be locked up either. It is not my style and the streets have just messed up my whole life. And I should not be blaming myself. And sometimes I think, when is my life going to end? What am I going to be in another seven or eight years, no thanks to my dad and my brother? They were tired of me comin' back up here.

And I will be back on the block like every day with my friends and all you ninjas be on the block thinking that's cool and stuff. And smoking and drinking, you is hurting yourself. I really don't know what to say.

But what I am going to say is get your life together. Focus more on your family and put all that pimpin' and shhh behind. When I am with my friends, I think more about my family and what I am doing wrong, and I just want to get my life together.

RIP Lil' Mama.

-Ella, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ella, you make a lot of good points in here. We hope you remember this now that you've been released. We are so happy you got your release. You're a smart girl; you know what you have to do. Focus on your family and get your life together, we wish you the best.

Getting Ready For Freedom

Me, I try not to think about what is going on on the outside. It would worry me too much. I try to think about changing me while I'm in here so when I do go out to the world I'm ready for it.

I read books to help me learn about myself. It helps me learn why some juveniles act the way they do it. This also helps me forget about the time in here.

I know things are going on out there that I'm missing out on, but I'm here for a reason, so while I'm here why not make the best of it?

-Diddy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We can understand why focusing on the things you're missing out on could add a layer of stress you don't need. At the same time, we admire the fact that you are looking at things that will help you prepare for a life of freedom. That positive, forward-thinking view, should take you out of here permanently. What books have you found most helpful in your self-education?

I'll Work At It

When I look out my window I see construction trucks, PO cars, 5-Os, and regular cars. I often wish it were me schmobbin' in one of da cars driving away from dis spot and not looking back — not looking back because I wouldn't be coming back. It would be me in the driver's seat driving to my freedom, driving to my life in a '92 Jeep Cherokee.

Then I snap back into reality... Damn! I was just daydreaming. The cold notion hits me that I got a lot of work to do before my dream can become a reality, before I can really enjoy my freedom physically and mentally without the restraints of probation.

I will do what I need to do to be free out of this system. I'm willing to take the stairs not tha elevator. There ain't much worth working for in life that is easy to achieve.

-M-Reezy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We particularly like this piece because it captures both the desire to float away from this place and the reality of the work necessary to make that desire come true. Just out of curiosity, what's so special about the '92 Cherokee? (We bet you'd settle for a VW junker if it could take you away from all this...) As you say, MR, the way to achieve your goal is by working at it steadily, one step at a time. Just keep moving forward, and soon you'll be looking back at just how far you've come.



Seeing Nothing

When I look out my window, I wish nothing was there, because if there is nothing there, there wouldn't be no problems in my life, and I think I would think before I'd act. I wouldn't be in here and I'd probably think positive, for I can do positive things and I wouldn't have my mother being stressed out.

So screw what everybody thinks, because you can only trust one person, and that person is yourself. This is what I wish for when I look out my window. "So be about your shhh."

-Ju Nasty B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: So now that you know this and say screw all the folks who are thinking and acting negatively, can you do what you know is right in spite of all the crap outside your window? What catches you up? Good writing.

Emotions

Sometimes when I sit in my cell I have many thoughts and flashbacks of how my life has been like and how my future should be like. In my life, I've always had some type of emotion, weather it was hate, love, or anger.

I noticed I would always try to hide them so people didn't know what was going on in my household. I look back now after so many years and think it hurts to see that most of the time I hid my emotions so people didn't think I was weak.

After looking at my life I love dreaming about how my future and my life can change if I would just be myself. Even in those situations when I feel weak, I think I should let it show and maybe that way I won't be so hurt or full of hate years later.

-Karen, Napa

From The Beat: It's always good to release your emotions! And writing is the greatest way! You're very good at it! How did you feel after writing this reflective piece? We're looking forward to hearing more!

My Window

When I look out my window, I don't see anything much, because they have big blocks of windows here. I just see a big blur of green, because there's a tree in front of it. But I wish I can see freedom. I mean, I'm stuck in the Hall, but I receive letters and make phone calls and feel like my mind's out there. It seems funny and crazy, but it's true.

But it would be more extremely wonderful if I could look out of my own window... I'm going home in five days. I can't wait to see mi amor. He means the world to me. I love him so much and I'm really lookin' forward to see him and to see my family and eat my own Viet food, ya heard? I'm sick of the county food. Gotta eat my rice dat my step-momma be makin', wit' the chicken and beef and broccoli... Damn, I can't wait.

-Lil' Mami, Marin

From The Beat: It must be awful not to even be able to see the outside from your room, Lil' Mami. But being in Juvy's not about the view or the food. It's about your freedom and depriving you of it. When you go home this week, will you remember how you didn't like being in Juvy and make up your mind nothing's worth going back up there?

Change Yo' Life

It's hard time in the struggle

'Cause ninjas on the block want to bubble
And ninjas gone make it happen in the hustle
I'm grabbin' my bundle to get it off 'cause I love it
I run wit' a team of real ninjas and we start stuff
Livin' the beef will have a ninja on some caution
One false move will have a ninja costin'

Living the life

Man, I'm out here livin' it right
I see you young ninjas livin' the hype
I see you young ninjas out all night
Duckin' bullets and you run for ya life
You young ninjas need to find new hypes
'Cause right now it's not nothing you like
Ninja teens dying just for one old fight
That's why you youngtas need to change yo' life

-Dre Jona B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's good to have Dre Jona's voice back in The Beat. We think you've described a lot of good reasons for youngsters to look for a different path to walk, and we wonder if you plan to apply your advice to your own life. What changes do you plan to make when you get out of here? Every journey begins with a single step. What will your first one be?

Passed Me By

Something that passed me by is my childhood. I've been comin' in and out of the Hall since I was 12 years old. I try to stay out but it's hard because it's hard for me to change the way I live.

I grew up with gang members all my life. If I try to change I'll still have enemies, and all my homeboys will think I'm fake. If I could, I would have never started claiming, but I grew up with my dad in and out of prison and my mom let me and my brothers do what we want. Like my mom would go to work and we would have parties. My gang would give me something to do 'cause there ain't too many things going on at my house. I'm not trying to say gangs are good or anything.

-Bueno, Napa

From The Beat: What do you think you need to stop doing or start doing to stop coming to the Hall? If you had a job, do you think that you would stop kicking it with your folks? If you keep on gang banging, what do you think your future will look like?

A Beautiful Memory

When I was young, I lived in Mill Valley. I remember going to Chile festivals and I would dance to the music that the famous Jerry Garcia and his band, the Grateful Dead, would play. I remember dancing in the moonlight with my mom and eating chili all day and going to play on our favorite rope swing. Me and my big brother, Josh, and my identical twin, Jeremy, were purposely falling off into the lake, thirty feet below.

It was great and the best part about it was me winning all of the pool chicken fajitas, and I got the best Super Soaker for winning the tournament. My mom was so proud of me and my step dad Jack, when we won the tournament and I will never forget what she said, "You're my hero and I love you."

-Jason, Marin

From The Beat: This one event makes it sound like you had a beautiful childhood, Jason. You seem to have a wonderful family. What lovely memories. What is going on in your life on the outs now that makes you happy? What was so important that made you give up your freedom?



Through With The Game

Like Mya Angelo I speak from heart
Still see demons in the dark
The night my friend got offed
Pain invades my soul
I'm sixteen, feels like the pain won't go
The game don't know that I'm through wit' it
Too many kids walking to school getting hit by stray bullets
RIP to all the fallen soldiers of the city

-Teflon Don B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This tight little poem fills in some holes that we don't always hear about in "The Game." Yes, it can deliver the goods, but the price for delivery can be as high as life itself.

Back From CYA

What's up, I'm back. I just came back from CYA for a court date. I been there already nine months. I came back to court 'cause my attorney filed a motion to have me removed from CYA. They have been coming out with hella news articles talking about how YA is hella dangerous and how they don't offer us no help. So I went to court on Tuesday, and the judge denied the request to move me from YA. So I should be going back sometime soon. I was supposed to go back yesterday (Monday), but they didn't come.

I still got a year-and-a-half before my parole consideration date (PCD), and if they don't parole me on my PCD, then I'll max out till 2007. But my jurisdiction time don't end till my 25th birthday, so I can still go back to the Y 'till I turn 25 or if my case is serious, they can send me straight to the pen'.

YA to me ain't nothing. I like it better than being in juvenile; over there you get to do more stuff. We get walkmans, TV's in our room. They got a pool, we be going to the pool when it's hella hot. And it be hot most of the time 'cause the females' CYA is down in Ventura by LA in Southern California.

Well, this is it for now. To The Beat staff, make sure you write me and keep me updated with The Beat. To all the homies, keep your heads up and I'll see you guys soon, whenever I touch down. Much love. Alrato

-Lazy GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Good writing, Lazy. Why don't you write us from the Y? So how else are things at the Y besides the pool and TVs and stuff? Are you staying out of mess down there? You speak of paroling or maxing out as if you don't care which one happens. Do you care?

They have been coming out with hella news articles

Some Kind Of Message From God

A message of unexpected kindness. In the last two weeks I've been friendly to a lot of my enemies and fake friends. I know it's crazy, but I do not lie. I say it's faith and hope in God.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. If your enemies are hungry — feed them. If he or she is thirsty — give them a drink in Jesus' name. That's the kind thing to do. Give your life to Jesus Christ and believe in him. He is the one with the key.

-Kenn, Napa

From The Beat: We like the idea of killing your enemies with kindness. Love the ones that hate you — that way they'll have nothing to do! What would you say to those who consume themselves with hate?

Fifteen And Haven't Had A Childhood

When I be sittin' in my room, I be thinkin' 'bout all types of shhh. I'm gettin' sent to George Jr. I ain't really had no chance for a childhood; I've always been moving around 'cause I've always been messin' up.

I was born in Daly City, started messing up, got sent to Hayward; messing up out there, got sent to Miami, and all different parts of Miami. I've been back almost two years.

Since I've been back. I've stayed in Lake View, Potrero Hill, 3rd St., and the Mission. I was just starting to get close to people and now I'm off

again.

Since 6th grade I ain't been in a school for a whole year. I ain't known nobody except my family for more then three years, ever.

When I get out, I don't know what I'm 'a do 'cause I'm so used to moving, I tried to leave before I got sent.

I'm only fifteen, but I forget a lot 'cause everybody always thinks I'm a lot older. I had two girls pregnant last year. I stopped goin' home and I was out there tryin' to take care of myself.

In one year I've been here five times and four times for robbery. I've been thinking about all this shhh lately, like I ain't gonna never have no childhood. I can't be like, "Ay, yo' remember when we was lil' and you did whatever," 'cause I ain't really grew up with nobody. That's what I messed out on.

-Tyree B2, SF/YGC

From the Beat: What a sad story, Tyree. So is this the time when you will finally start doing what you need to do? We can hear your frustration at not being able to build relationships, so we're wondering what it would take for you to stop messing up so you could stay in one place and see what it's like. Do you know what happened to the girls you got pregnant? Do you want to?

Gone

I threw my teenage life away, because of the choices I made. I get to the point where I'm doing really good and I want to make the right choices, but somehow I always fall either because of drugs or gangs.

My life has passed me so fast I can't believe it. I wish I could have changed the first time I got locked up, but here I am once again just waiting for my next placement and hopefully when I get out, I can stay strong and start doing some of the right things in life, like get a house or an apartment and build up a strong relationship with someone and get a job. I need to stop messin' up in life or my next placement will be CYA.

-Mike, Napa

From The Beat: It sound like you know what you need to do in order to get what you want from life. Now, what are you willing to give or give up in order to make your dreams come true? What kind of job do you hope to obtain? What do you want in a relationship? Good luck with all you do!

**I need to stop messin'
up in life or my next
placement will be CYA.**



Wishing For A Better Life

When I look out my window I wish I was at home with my family and I just think about what I've done wrong. I just pray to God that I would never make any bad mistakes like that ever again.

And I also ask God to please give the person that we hurt — to give my blessings and wish that he would be okay. If I see him on the streets again I would walk up to him and say that I'm sorry for what we did and give him a hug.

When I look outside my window, I also think about what am I going to do next. What's my next stop going to be? I really want to go back to school and pick up my grades and play football for San Leandro High and see where it will take me in life. I hope it will take me somewhere "good."

-Paul, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some people may accuse you of punking out but in reality you are the most courageous and intelligent person for feeling this way. What makes you different is that you have learned from your mistakes and you allow yourself to feel sorry. Too many times young men are so ignorant and scared to admit how they really feel and don't learn from their mistakes. You have already found your next step, and that is going back to school and wanting to play football. Do it! Be patient with yourself. Are you willing to lose all your so-called friends that have nothing better to do but get high and hurt other people so that you can live a better life? You can contact The Beat for more help in making this transition.

I'm facin' some of my life behind bars

Lo Que Se Me Fue De Las Manos

Lo que se me fue de las mano es el tiempo que estoy perdiendo aqui, lo cual lo debería de estar pasando con mi familia, con mi madre, illendo a la escuela, estar con mis amigos y amigas. También se me fue el sueño de ser un ejemplo para los pequeños en mi familia.

Se me fue la oportunidad de estar libre. Apesar que se me han ido estas cosas de las manos, todavía puedo y voy a alcanzar las metas de graduarme del middle school, high school, y college, llegar a tener una profección y que mi familia se sienta orgulloso de mí.

From The Beat: Que lástima escuchar todo esto que se te perdió. Espeamos que alguna vez puedas recuperarlo. No te procupes amigo, todavía tienes tiempo para hacer las cosas que no pudistes hacer. Algún día podrás hacer estas cosas, hacer que la gente te mire caminando recto con la cabeza en alto.

What Slipped Through My Hands

What slipped through my hands is the time that I am wasting being in here. I should be spending my time being with my family, with my mother, going to school, and kicking it with my homeboys and homegirls. Also, my dream of being a role model for the younger members of my family slipped away when I got locked up.

My opportunity to be free has slipped through my hands. Even though all these things have slipped through my hands, I still can, and will, reach my goals of graduating from middle school, high school, then college, and grow up to have a profession that my family can be proud of.

-Alvaro B1, SF/YGC

Cuando Me Lebanto Y Miro Por Mi Ventana

Cuando me lebanto todos los días y veo por mi ventana a unas personas caminando por la calle, yo me imagino como si estuviera afuera con ellos, pero después de pasar unos minutos, todo vuelve a la normalidad y la realidad.

Desde que estoy encerrado todo lo que veo son a las paredes, a una puerta, y todo parece un sueño, pero no es un sueño, es la realidad. Cuando estoy en mi cuarto sólo veo como el sol sube hasta que se oculta. Después, cae la noche y mis ojos se nublan, y el día siguiete el solo refleja otra vez por mi ventana. Y es todo lo que veo.

From The Beat: Debe de ser triste ver esa belleza de vida y verla ocultarse, cuando uno esta encerrado entre paredes y sin luz del día. Amigo, ten paciencia, veras que todo volvera a su normalidad. Esperamos que cuando esto pase, no te vuelvas a meter en problemas.

When I Get Up And See Through My Window

When I wake up every day and look through my window and see some people walking down the street, I imagine myself walking alongside them, but after some minutes pass by, everything returns to normal and my mind comes back to reality.

Ever since I got locked up, all I've seen are walls, a door, and everything appears to be a dream, but it's not; it's reality. When I am in my room, I only see the sun come up until it sets. After that happens, night falls and my eyes cloud up. On the following day, the sun once again shines through my window. That's all I see.

-José, Marin

Passed Me By

I feel like that my life just flow right by
Just because I wanted to grow up quick

But now I feel that I want

to be just younger than this way

I was livin' because that's what led me in here

Now I'm facin' some of my life behind bars

I am missing out on my baby bein' born

My loved ones at home that cry to hear that I
will be locked up for some crazy shhh,

-B'z Bow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why do you think you wanted to grow up so quick? We know you can't get back your childhood but we know you can get back your life and freedom and have fun again like a kid. We hope that you will figure something out by the time you get out so you don't have to do this for the rest of your life. Let us know how we can help.

**There were times
that something really
horrible happened
I'd sometimes
contemplate death**



I Wish...

When I look out my window, I wish that my mother and father would be waiting to get me out of my cell. I look out my window every day, hoping God would be out there, helping me to get through the day.

I wish that the laws be softer and that all the gangs stop using guns. Guns are not the way to handle things. Guns just make the law stricter.

-Florian, Marin

From The Beat: How would you make the laws softer if you were writing them? Do gangs use guns where you live? Does that frighten you? You're right when you say that when youth use guns to commit crimes, that it causes the authorities to make laws stricter. But teenagers using guns causes something even worse than that, guns help youth to kill and injure people!

A Man

When will I go home?

This is the question I always seem to ask.
Back again for assault and testing dirty at TASC.
State is thinking to Adobe I may get committed
I told them it was wrong — at least I can admit it.
I don't blame them for their recommendation
It's been three and a half years and I'm still on probation

The game is over, the state has stop playing
I said one more chance, they said that's what I've always been saying
Reality just hit me like a rock to the dome
But I'm still not ready to go home
I don't really know who I am
But when I figure this out someday
I will be a man!

-Teddy, Maricopa SEF, Arizona

From The Beat: If they let you out today, do you think you could make it? How can you convince yourself you've changed without feeling like you've faked it? Once you know you're ready for freedom's responsibilities, then nobody else can judge your abilities. So keep climbing until you reach what you call success, for life will throw you many quizzes, but in the end you are the one who grades the test.

Things Have Passed Me By

During my stay here in Juvenile Hall, a lot of things have passed me by.

For starters, for the first time in my life I spent Easter locked up and away from my family and friends. My mom had the chance to come and visit me. Did she? No! That hurts me emotionally and it makes me feel that my family wants me locked up. My little sister is five and a few days ago was probably wondering where her brother who she loves dearly is and why he wasn't there to help her look for Easter eggs that the Easter Bunny hid. I wish I could have been there with her.

Also, while I'm in here, I've missed out on Spring break. I could have been out, chillin' with my friends, my family and 4/20 is comin' up and I'm going to be stuck in here. I turn eighteen in July and when I get out, I will be on the bracelet 'til that magical day when I'm legally an adult. Scary and cool at the same time. Scary, 'cause I can go to the county jail and cool that I can I can buy cigarettes and blunt wraps for me and my friends.

-Spoon, Marin

From The Beat: Do you think your mom has explained to your little sister where you are and why? What kind of influence does your mom think you are on your sister? Is your mom right? Do you encourage your sister to do well in school and listen to your mom? Why don't you call your mom and ask her why she didn't visit you? Let her know you want her to come up to Juvy. Maybe she'll come next visiting day. We hope so. And forget buying blunt wraps when you're eighteen if you want to stay on the outs!

What I See

When I look out my window I see construction
When I look out my window of my life, I see destruction
When I look out my window I wish I was home
When I look out my window I feel so alone
When I look out my window I see my release
Because every dog has his day off his leash

-Spanky, Napa

From The Beat: When you look out your window, do you see a better future in store? How can you make your future better than your past? What are some of the lessons you've learned through all of this?



Don't Judge Me

You don't know my life
So who are you to judge?
Because you're not a gangster
You think that you're above
You look down at my homies
And all of our actions
You think we're less than human
Because of our color
We live the crazy life
And you the life of a prep
You'd understand our actions
If you took another look in depth
But you don't even try
So you start to disrespect
all the things I do
So I have to put you in check
If you lived my life —
walked a day in my shoes
You'd stop talking smack and understand
what I do

-Spanky, Napa

From The Beat: We're not trying to judge, we're just asking questions. Where do you see your life destined? Do you ever stop to think where you're headed in life? If you continue to bang, do you think you'll have a lot of strife? What kind of future does gang banging have in store? Ask yourself, what are you doing this for?

The Past

In the past my life was full of anger and tears
I could not deal with these feelings of fears
My life was just an everlasting state of ongoing lying
There were many deaths in my family and I was crying Anger and rage
These false pretenses I had to change
My life I have now changed forever
And I am doing much better
My life is now full of love and laughter
And things are better in the here and after.

-Tiny, Napa

From The Beat: We're glad that your life has taken a turn for the best. What do you see in store for the rest? How can you make the laughter last? Do you see yourself getting stronger through your past?



This White Man

I wonder what is it about the white man as I think...

The white man made a gun
The white man made electricity
The white man made a car
The white man now clone animals
The white man made these jails
The white man made airplanes
The white man made these wonderful sports
The white man made the Bible
The white man say' Hitler is evil
The white man killed about 100 million Indians
Why is he so smart and evil?

-Larry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The white man, aka System is responsible for oppressing many people in history. Educate and empower yourself with the history that still affects us today. Remember all humans are capable of intelligence and doing evil. How will you not contribute to the wrong doings of the world but instead help people?

To My Future Wifey

i hope you be there for me
when times get hard
i hope you'll say yes
to all my twenty-one questions like 50 cent
i hope when we have kids
that we can live in a fat house
with a lot of money
i hope we stay married
together forever
i hope me plus you
equals complete
i hope both of us can have a relationship
with each other's family
i hope that we can be together
a long time and still be happy with each other
i hope we can be friends
as well as lovers
i hope that we can explore
the world together
i hope we can comfort each other
in the time of need
i hope my future wifey
is everything i just said
holla

-Markie-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a wonderful list of desiderata — what you'd like to see in and with your partna. But what about you? What are you going to do to make sure she's not writing letters to jail? Give us a list of your positive plans, and also the things you plan never to do again! (And don't give us that street fantasy bull that leads straight to the penitentiary.)



I Need

i need someone to love me
and someone to hold me
i need someone to show me
that i can be their only
i need someone that's fine
i need someone i can call all mine
i need someone i can trust
i need someone to be there
i need someone who cares
i need someone i know
is not going nowhere
i need someone who's real
i needs someone i can feel
i need someone i can hug
i need someone that's strong
i need someone that's not
going to do me wrong
i need someone to kiss
i need someone to miss
when i'm all healed
and ready
i need someone
to love me like this

-Tishay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you mean someone other than you, but you need to be all these things, too — to you! And then you'll be all healed and ready to find someone just like you — smart, full of heart, and staying steady in a world full of shady players chasing 'fetti. Look for the same qualities in you and the one you want to share love with, too — and you'll do cool!

So-Called Homies

Would my homies be there for me when I ride?
Or would my homies be there when I die?
When I'm on the outs, my homies say they love me,
They ride for me and a life they will take for me.
Once I got inside I realized — homies ain't nothing.

-Lil' E, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Many of us go through that realization once we go to jail. The same people who we did our dirt with don't even ask about us when we get locked up. The only thing you can do is find different types of friends.

Words To My Little Cousin

Back in the end of '96, my little cousin's dad was killed in a crash two hours before he was born, and now he's about 8 years old and he starting to ask about his dad, and what was he like, and how did he die, and where do people go when they die.

If my little cousin, Dan, was here right now I would tell him things like don't trip little one, because yo' dad is in a better place. He don't have to worry about nobody following him home, trying to do something to you or your mom because of the things he was doing, feel me lil' one? But don't trip because he's in a better place and he's watchin' over you.

RIP Lil' Dan, Lil' Mikey, Lil' C.

-Lil' Molly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's terrible that your cousin has to grow up without a father. What do you think will be the biggest obstacle Dan will face without a father? Are you a good role model for your little cousin?

**If my little cousin Dan
was here right now I
would tell him things
like don't trip little one,
because yo' dad is in a
better place.**



Yesterday/Today (Part 2)

So yesterday was the first time I committed a felony/murder. I am so scared, I don't know what to do.

So I just go on with my life. So I go to school. And there is a lot of fuss, so I keep myself away from others. Then they don't ask me no questions.

Me and my friend was going to the skating rink after school today. He was really big on the killing, because it was his mother's brother's son — it was his cousin.

He told me that whoever did it he would personally kill him with his bare hands! And I got kind of spooked, and it made me want to run away from all this.

Man, it is 2010 — and they don't play games about killing and things like that no more . . . (To be continued.)

-Paul, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You must have gotten a laugh out of our mistaking your fiction for truth. Then again, fiction has its truth, too — and in your story, the killer's gun did nothing but get him into a world of trouble by sending another to an early grave. How his friend's words in this week's installment must have cut your narrator like a knife, causing him to bleed internally with guilt, shame, stress and fear! Keep writing.

i wish i could be one of your teardrops

Un Soldado Muerto

Yo les estoy escribiendo para decirles a los del Beat que yo perdí a uno de mis mejores homies. Un contrario lo mató. El era un buen soldado, él siempre quiso hacer nombre, quise hacer reconocido. El siempre decía que su nombre siempre iba a estar en lo alto. Su nombre era Trucho. El prometió rifar hasta la muerte como lo había dicho y así fue.

Yo extraño a Trucho un monton. Para mí, él no está muerto y nunca lo estará porque aunque él no esté aquí en persona, él está en mi corazón y siempre lo estará. Él pasó la mayor parte de su tiempo preso y la menor parte libre. No pudo disfrutar de su vida como el hubiera querido porque murió muy joven. Él sólo tenía 18 años, pero para su corta edad, tenía respeto de todos. Sólo espero que lo pueda ver cuando me muera. Yo sé que me está esperando en el otro mundo.

From The Beat: Que triste es lo que ha pasado con tu amigo, esperamos que donde sea que esté que se encuentre feliz, descansando. Ahora, hay que fijarse en los que estamos vivos, a nadie le gustaria perder la vida de esa manera. Amigo, aprendan de esto malo que les pasa a la gente por andar en cosas como estas. Me imagino que ustedes no les gustaria que fueran sus amigos que estuvieran hablando que tú o ustedes estan muerto. Acuerdensen que los malditos siempre estan preso y bajo tierra, no se gana nada con tener ese tipo de respeto. ¿Crees que valió la pena todo el respeto que obtubo, y todo el tiempo que estubo preso sin aprovechar lo buena de la vida, solo por un respeto que lo llebo a la muerte?

A Dead Soldier

I'm writing to tell those at The Beat, and who read The Beat, that I lost one of my best homies. A rival of his killed him. He was a good soldier, he always wanted to make a name for himself, and he wanted to be recognized. He would always say that his name would always be highly regarded. His name was Trucho. He promised to represent the 'hood until the day he died and that's how it went down.

I miss Trucho a whole lot. For me, he is not dead and he'll never be dead, because even though he's not here in person, he's in my heart and he'll always be there. He spent most of his life locked up and the least amount of time of his life being free. He never had the opportunity to enjoy his life like he deserved because he died at a very young age. He was only 18 years old, but even at such a young age, he had everyone's respect. I only hope that I'll be able to see him when I die. I know that he is waiting for me in the next life.

-Popeye B4, SF/YGC

Yo Era

Yo era unos de esos vatos locos que nunca se arrepentían de nada, de esos que le valía madre todas las cosas. Pero esta vez que estoy aquí me he arrepentido de las cosas que he hecho. Si no hubiese hecho estas cosas que hice, creo que nunca hubiera perdido lo que he perdido.

Pero siento no decirles lo que he perdido pero siento que nunca lo recuperaré y nadie lo podrá recuperar por mí. Solo sé que duele perder algo como lo que he perdido, y con lo que he perdido me he dado cuenta de las cosas malas que he hecho. Me he dado cuenta que por estupideces uno puede perder las cosas que uno más quiere en la vida, y hasta las esperanzas como yo lo he perdido. Así que les recomiendo que piensen.

From The Beat: Pueda ser que hayas perdido muchas cosas en tu vida, pero eso no es la razón para que te pongas en mente que todo está perdido. Hay muchas cosas que se van y otras cosas que vienen. Puedas ser que hayas perdido muchas cosas en el pasado, pero esas mismas cosas se pueden recuperar si de verdad quienes.

I Used To Be . . .

I used to be one of those fools who never felt bad about anything, one of those fools that didn't give a damn about things. This time that I am locked up, I've come to regret some of the things I've done. If I had not done the things that I did, I believe that I would have never lost the things that I have lost.

But I kind of don't want to tell y'all what I have lost, because I feel like I will never recover what I've lost and nobody will be able to recover those things for me. I just know that it hurts to lose something like the things that I've lost, and with what I've lost, I've come to realize all the bad things that I have done. I've come to realize that because of stupidities, one can lose everything that they love the most in life. I've even lost my sense of hope. Therefore, I recommend that y'all think things over before acting.

-Lil' Droopy B4, SF/YGC

I

wish i
could be
a special part
of you, i wish i could be
one of your teardrops
so that i could be born in
your eyes and roll gently
down your cheeks and
die on your sweet
soft lips
i wish

-Lil' Cell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They call it "concrete poetry" when a poem takes the shape of what it's about. Your tender poem looks like a teardrop on the page. Sweet!



A Lot Has Passed Me By

I think that my daughter needs me in her life. I'm missing out on a lot of stuff. Her 1st birthday just passed me by. I think that I'm missing out on a lot of things like getting my high school diploma, and being with my family.

I think that if I had another chance, I would not let nothing pass me by.

The only thing that should pass me by is a day or something like that. My 18th birthday is about to pass me by on Wednesday, the 21st. I have a lot of stuff that already passed me by since I've been incarcerated.

-Billy-Ray B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Of course your daughter needs you, and it is part of a larger tragedy that you can't be with her — not just to celebrate those milestones like birthdays and first tooth, but to guide her through the pitfalls that await her. But, unless you are facing life in prison, you will have another chance to make up for lost time. We hope that when you get that chance, you will remember just how much you lost out on (and how much others lost out on) by your being in jail. We wish you a happy birthday, and remind you that turning 18 brings you into a whole new world of criminal justice possibilities, and none of them is good.

Wanting To Get Out

When I look out the window, I wish I could get out the 'hood because too many people is getting killed over nothing, for real though.

I would like to get out and move from the 'hood, but I would come back and put my folks on, because it's not right if you get out of the 'hood and don't come back because that's where you're from. I love my big brothers and lil' sisters and I know they will do the same for me.

But like I was saying, people getting killed over a dice game, dope, trees, money. We killing our own brothers over stupid shhh. Excuse me for my French, but that's how I feel, over bull stuff, Man, and that hurts our people for how we kill each other.

-Lil' Rob B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Is there a way you can avoid all the dangers that are in your 'hood? Do you see yourself getting out of the 'hood one day? Could you work to improve things where you live? Where is a place you would like to live?

Dear Daughter

I'm so sorry about what happened to your father. I know how it feels when your father's not in your life because I was raised without a father.

I'm sorry for what happened to your daddy, and I will keep writing you letters until you understand that your father dying was a misunderstanding.

It's good that they got the man so he could do his time.

I'm going to write you again.

-Anthony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The empathy you have for this young child who you don't personally know is so beautiful and kind. What do you think will be the hardest part about growing up without a father? Will she struggle in the same ways that you've struggled?

**do you remember
when your mom died
and i was right
there for you**

In Time

what passed me by
that's what i wonder day by day
if everyone from the outside world
is doin' okay
but it's hard sometimes
to keep my head focused
and ready
i got to keep on track
and do right and try
to stay steady
no matter what happens
i got to follow my dreams
but i give up sometimes
just because of some little thing
feels like people takin' thoughts
out my head
and every night i have to pray
before i go to bed
my head spinnin' with thinkin'
'bout freedom and fun
but in my heart
i still know that i'm number one
in myself
i'm like a stealth
i will take off and blow
but sometimes what i do
i don't think or don't know
i feel like i'm kinda sick
i got to make better choices
about the friends i pick
but now i'm stuck in my room
thinkin' about what to do
handcuffs on my wrists
from tryin' to be part of the crew
but now i am finished with this
and will conclude this rhyme
by sayin' all that passed me by
will be revealed in time

-Gerrell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You took your meditative powers home in this poem, and apply your powers of insight on yourself alone. It's true you've made some bad decisions trying to run with your crew. But now that you've realized this about you — what can you do? Just as you say, be more careful about the friends you choose, okay? You know you like books and what's taught in school, so pick friends who care about learning, too. On the real, squares have fun, too! Ya feel? Change your playmates, playgrounds and playthings. Then see what tomorrow brings.

**it's a first time
for every thing.**

Passed Me By

It's now April, the month of my birth. Just last month I had plans for this month. Now everything is just going to pass me by. I just want to say to all the Taurus and Aries — Happy Birthday and I feel for you if you in here.

I been in here for Christmas two times, for Thanksgiving two times. This is my first birthday, first Easter, but like they say — it's a first time for everything.

-Lil' Joey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hopefully it's your last birthday in there, too! But that's all up to you. "You reap what you sow." What are you willing to give or give up to reap the benefits of freedom?



Passed Me By

Damn, this is a good subject, and I was just thinking about that today. I think time began to pass me by during my childhood because I thought it was more fun to be out gangbanging and drinking instead of being home playing with my toys and going to school.

I been tripping about that stuff, and in a way, I regret that shhh. Then time passed me by again with my baby because while I've been sitting here, I keep on losing my precious time, time I can't every get back — every minute, every second, every hour, day, week and months I have just lost.

So I know I just can't keep on wasting my time, and even though I am locked up, I have decided to make my time useful. I want to at least appreciate the time I have and go learn something every day. I have been reading books that I can learn something new from and educate myself.

-Estrella GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Beautiful attitude; beautiful writing. You definitely have your head on right these days. How on top of life you'll be once you hit the outs again. What are you reading?

Something On My Mind

Well, I got a whole bunch of things on my mind, so bear with me. Yesterday I found out that my PO recommended YA for me. He's messed up for that, it's only my first offense.

I also had to call my brother yesterday after hearing that and I told him. It was his birthday yesterday when I told him. What a birthday present, huh? Well, I'm also missin' out on too much things. It's been two months and counting and I can't even see my girlfriend. I miss her so much; I swear I love her with all my heart. I see all the pain in my mom's eyes when she comes to visit me, my brother, too.

I'm hurting inside knowing that my loved ones is hurt. I swear my mom, brother and my girl stays on my mind all day every day . . . I just got so much on my mind, I can keep going, but I'm gonna stop 'cause it hurts just thinking about this.

-Lil' Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now that's a lot of stuff right there, and we're sorry you and your family are going through so much! There are probably a lot of people in there who are thinking the same way. If you are sent to CYA, what can you do to make the best of your time? How can you be strong for yourself and your family? What will you do to deal with the hurt and pain? And, how can you ease the pain for your loved ones? What was the biggest lesson learned through all of this?

Harsh Reality

Why do I do what I do? The streets is crazy, it's barely no money, folks robbin' and killing their own kind, showing no respect for others. What's wrong wit' this world, our environment? Maybe we need jobs, but they won't allow us to because of our attitudes. Or maybe we just don't stay focused; we look at ourselves different from other people. We say to ourselves — we can't do it, 'cause maybe we don't try hard enough or maybe you refuse to give yourself a chance.

Some people just give up; they don't even know who they are, but they have the nerve to say they better than another. We all equal, we have fingers to write with, eyes to look at stuff different, a nose to smell what's around you, feet to walk away from a situation, a brain for knowledge and for thinking.

-E Feel It, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beautiful writing. The world can be a cold place, but your life doesn't have to be. You can't change the world, but you can change things about yourself that you dislike. You don't like being locked up — find freedom. You don't like disrespect — respect yourself and others. Crazy streets? Stay off 'em! It starts with you, homie!

When I Look Out My Window

When I look out my window one million things cross my mind. I feel lost here in jail, all I could think about is my family and also my son.

So when I look out my window, I see freedom, life, and the only thing that keeps me from the world is this building and a big fence. So when I look out my window, looking up at the sky asking Jesus to please give me another chance at life, with him, my son and my family.

-Sonny, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you were given another chance at freedom, what would you do with it? Would you treat your freedom differently than you did in the past? How would you make up for lost time with your family?

Dear Child

You are young and don't really understand, but you suffered a terrible loss early, but times are sad for you and your family. You know what, I bet your dad was an incredible person as well as a father, but you probably don't remember.

Try to dwell on your memories of the good, but if you can't, remember the good times, just try to dwell on your pictures. Keep the image, my daddy this, my daddy that, and it would get you through depressed times, but keep your head up young angel of grief.

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your sensitivity toward this child that you don't even know is heartfelt and profound! What will be the hardest obstacle this kid will face without his father? If you were to die tomorrow, and had a kid (or one on the way), how would you want your child to remember you?

Missing Out

Well it's me again, Gato, writing to The Beat. I miss out on a lot of things when I'm in this hellhole. It ain't so much bad in here, but just the fact I ain't got my freedom. When I'm in the Hall all I do is think what I could be doing out there in my varrio where I was raised.

I could just think right now of what I could be doing, but I know I would back in the 'hood soaking on a King Cobra 40 with the homies at the park. Now I'm missing out on that because I'm in max waiting for my court date.

I also missed out on my brothers first baseball game and Easter, but I ain't trippin'. I know I'll be back out someday. I just got to do my time. Missing out on everything and being locked up is just all a part of the game.

I'd rather be in the Hall than in the cemetery. But either one is an option when you gangbang like me.

-Young Gato, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How do you feel knowing that those two options are the first things on your mind? The gang life may seem cool, and it may be hard to get out of, but how long before you end up in the wrong spot? Then it won't be you missing Easter or a ball game, it will be your family in all black wishing they could bring you back to life.



Wishing To Be On The Other Side

When I look out my window I wish I could be on the other side of that window and to be able to do the things that I want to do in life,
like going to the movies,
sleeping in your own bed,
going to parties,
hanging out with friends,
wearing your own clothes,
staying up as late as you want,
eating good food,
and just being able to do things that all the other teenagers in society are doing.

-Nate, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you ever did commit any crime, why do you think you weren't doing what other teenagers do that aren't getting locked up? What got you caught up? How can you start being a teenager again? We wish all these things for you too but you got some time to do and work to do on yourself.



My Life

(1)

every time i come here
i learn how to use my mind
and be smart
but the consequences
are to break
me and my family apart

(2)

when i grow up
i plan to be successful
tend to my needs
and be successful

(3)

the streets are calling
my name
and i can't control
myself
i know i'm not crazy and
i don't need
help

-Rasheed, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're not talking medical diagnosis, but if you can't resist the call of the street even knowing the street is tearing you and your family apart — then there's something crazy in your heart or your mind or your soul. What will it take to make you sane and whole?

Hard Life

life is hard
when ya hustlin'
or better yet
when ya strugglin'
suckas out here
be cupcakin'
so i know
where i'm goin'
i do my own math
get my own cash
and get the last laugh
hatas get in my way
so i knock them off
of my path
i'm out of control
don't know where to go
this game is old
i'm cold

'cause i got a jacket
with moth-eaten holes
it's over

i got too much dirt
layin' on top of my shoulders
can't step forward
'cause i'm gettin' blocked
by a boulder
so i go around
creep in the cuts
and still keep it lit
can't fall into negativity
so i keep it legit

-Scooby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Time to quit gettin' lit in the cuts, 'cause keeping a low profile is not changing your lifestyle, what! The negativity is in the act, not just the attention it attracts. Maybe it worked yesterday, but it's time for the next level, okay? Take it all the way up off the street, and let the negativity bark beneath your feet. If you're looking for a place just to start, come down to The Beat — 'cause we know you've got heart and talent. Are you ready for the challenge?

My Life

I think about being out having fun, having money and being with my family. I feel I messed up my life by coming in here and going to the "Y." Being in my cell ain't cool, I wake up mad some days, 'cause I think about why I'm in here.

I feel bad sometimes 'cause I can't be wit' my mom and lil' sister, brother, or my dad. I know I made some mistakes, but when I get out I'm gonna try and change. I be confused 'cause I don't know how my future is gonna turn out when I get out. And I feel I'm selfish, 'cause I'm putting my mom and dad through some things I shouldn't. So I'm going to get out of the Y and do something positive.

-Lil' Lo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think that when you get out, you'll be in more control of your future? Why or why not? If you decide to do right, then please handle your business and do the damn thang to the fullest.

**I feel I'm
selfish, 'cause
I'm putting
my mom and
dad through
some things I
shouldn't**

Wish I Could Be Free

when i look out my window
i wish i could be free
out on the street
at home with my family
forget all the insanity
i just wanna be free
when i get out
i'm not going to act a fool
i'm 'a go to school
not to be cool
but to get an education
an' follow the rules
do something
positive in life
forget standin' on the block
earnin' your stripes
i just want to get out
and do right
an' live my life
for jesus christ

-Poppa diddy pop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It begins with deciding you want to try, then get back in school and start doing right. That's how you'll earn stripes with Jesus Christ.

**When I look out my window I wish I could
be on the other side of that window**



Pain Tormenting My Brain

i have this pain
that's tormenting my brain
makes me want to go insane
i wish i wasn't in this game
so i wouldn't have to go through this shame
yeah i said shame
because it's a shame
that i have to steal
so i can get a meal
it feels like life is so short
this week i have to go to court
i broke my lady's heart
so now we're apart
can someone please
heal this broken heart of mine?
it will take time
but time is all i have
i'm in juvie tryin'
to ride this out like a sav'
my lady's right
she has a life to live
and she can't live it with me
because i'm a stupid idiot
trying to do something that isn't me
i wish i was a bee
so i could just be free
but there's no guarantee
there's a future for me

-Twin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Believe it or not, it breaks our hearts to see you move from the Camp back the Hall in a few weeks! It's not your fault you grew up having to support yourself, but you're almost a man — and you desperately need to learn some impulse control! Understand? You can't learn that high off alcohol! Why do you think so many youth who drink and get in trouble, won't even think about trying to live sober? You'd be with your girl, at least on weekends, in the free world.

I Missed Out On Love

So what do I think I missed out on? It would have to be my life, holidays, birthdays, special moments in my life that could happen.

Mainly my family is what I'm missing: teaching my little brothers not to follow my lead, in person, rather than through a pencil and paper. The thing I've missed most is really just the love! The love is what keeps you going through life — and I have been missing a lot of love.

Even though I get love on the outs from girls and my friends and people like that, I'm never really in the house to get love from my family. And when I'm in here, I've been wishing I had that love. And I'm thinking to myself, "If I'm in the house, I won't be getting in trouble!"

But these Oakland streets just call you and call you, until you just give in! After a long period in jail, I have come to realize that all the suffering I went through, it needs to stop — friends dying, family dying. I have to remember that if them friends and family were here, they would want me to make something of my life!

While I'm currently in jail, I'm missing out on seeing my brother get off parole and be able to come see us in Oakland. I'm also missing all of my girls; and, yes, I have more than a couple. But in here, I'm seeing which ones really care about me; and I'm labeling down who I want to be with — so that when I get out, I can get all the love I want.

-Freaky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you get to those last sentences, remember back to the one where you said, "I'm never really in the house to get love from my family." And don't trade away your family's love to keep your numbers up on how many girls you have; for one thing, it feeds into the confusion of values that leads people to places like this; because your family members may not always tell you what you want to hear, but they do want what's best for you; whereas girlfriends and street friends may not even know what's best for you or them. Ya feel? So stop the suffering you're putting yourself through, and be there for the people who need you! But it's a great piece, Corn Freaky, full of love and wisdom.

Take A Minute To Listen To This!

First and foremost allow me to extend my utmost respect to The Beat Within staff who takes the time out of their day to come spend time with us. But I do want to address a concern that I have regarding how you guys respond to certain topics.

The one that really aggravates me is how you guys respond to people who write about "the cause" when we involve Cesar Chavez. How would you guys know about our cause if you guys never heard the whole story? Trying to say all we do is result to violent acts in our neighborhoods. You guys don't even know how this started. Don't speak on something you have no knowledge about. All you know is what you can see from the outside looking in. So don't ever feel the obligation to tell us that our cause isn't and shouldn't be related to Cesar Chavez.

-Los, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hey, check this out, Cesar Chavez would roll over in his grave if he knew Latinos were killing other Latinos and using his name to justify it. Cesar advocated non-violence for Latino rights and he wouldn't have wanted Latinos killing Latinos over gang shhh and saying it was for the same cause that he advocated for. Some of us are old enough to have marched with Cesar Chavez and to have taken part in the great boycott. Wake up! Cesar Chavez is the Latino Martin Luther King!

I Wish For Hella Stuff...

There's hella shhh I wish for, but if they were only to come true, it would all be to the good.

Here's my wish starting with the most important.

Freedom, I wish I had it.

I wish I could be home with my mom.

I wish I could kiss and hug the girl I like.

I wish I could be sleeping on my own bed.

I wish I could eat whatever and whenever I want.

I wish I could be at school actually learning,

and not just reviewing like we do here.

I wish I could be riding in my car to the liquor store for some drank and blunts.

I wish I could be at work earning my legit money.

I wish I could be at the block just to say wussup to all my homies and associates.

I wish I could be at church on a nice Sunday morning.

I wish I could talk to the girl I really like.

I wish I would've never came back to this place,
or any other facility like it.

I just wish I could have my ordinary life back.

Much love . . .

-Lil' Johnnie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some wishes just take time to come true Lil' Johnnie. Some people believe that in order for wishes to come true, you have to pursue them, which means you have to do the things that make it easier for your wishes to really come true. Now you know that almost nothing comes without freedom, we hope that you to hold that in the highest regard and not do any thing foolish to forfeit/lose it. Your wishes have a very high chance of coming true — remember that one day when they are all realized.



Letter To My Unborn

dear loved one
i pray to god
that you are well
for as of now
i'm trapped in hell
or as your mother
would say — jail
sitting in my cell
hopin' that i get some mail
left like a ship drifting
without a sail
trapped in the belly
of the beast
as the pain an' anger
rise like bread yeast
going nights
with little sleep
stopping time
in my mind
'cause everything
use' to move so fast
but now i stop
to look back
so i say to my unborn
i'd love to see you soon

-Ben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It feels like hell, but this is purgatory — 'cause you will be free to change your story when your time is up. And for the sake of that young pup, walk through the pain and anger till you reach the positive stuff that will keep you free — so you never have to return to this reality!

I've Been Thinking

i've been doing a lot of
thinking
in the past few days here
all i have ever did
was thought about myself
and what i wanted
it's time to think about my
family
and what they want
i never trip off
what good things i have
until they're gone
so take advantage
of what you have
it might not last

-Leo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Take advantage of the chance to spend time with the family that loves you, and the chance to give them something in life — 'cause you never know what might happen when. The craziest secret is: when you give to those you love, it makes you happy. Look where doing "what I wanted" landed you (again).

To The Daughter Of The Gangster That Died

Your father is the most important person that should be in your life. I'm very sorry that your father died. I can't even begin to imagine how you must feel. I have both my parents.

I'm sure, since your father was a gangster, he was in and out of jail. I'm in jail right now. I want you to know that I will keep you and your family in my prayers.

I think you should try and stay away from the gangster life. It's not easy. I would know. But as soon as I get out, I'm going to try and change my life so I don't end up like your father.

I'm really sorry to hear that your father went out like that. I would like to get out my gang, but that's so hard to do without ending up dead. I want you to know I truly feel for you.

I hope that hearing about this kinda stuff in jail should stop! Don't ever come to jail. You don't ever want to be in my place, I promise you!

They are telling me now that I don't have any more time to write, but I want to tell you to stay safe.

-Bonebreaker, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a tender, sympathetic piece. We all wish the example of those who died in the streets would warn others away from that life — but you're one of the few who seems to draw the obvious conclusion that you'd better get out of the gangster life before you end up dead, too. As you point out, going to lockdown is no picnic either. That line about the gang killing you rather than letting you quit is bone-chilling. These are your friends? Thanks for sharing your honesty, sympathy and courage.

**trapped in
the belly
of the beast
as the pain
an' anger
rise like
bread yeast**

Let Them Know

what i'm about in this place
let them know
i'm not scared no more
let them know
you don't even know the real me
let them know
i'm going to be somebody
let them know
when i get out of the hall
i'm not coming back ya know
let them know
i'm not going to die alone
let them know
that i'm going to be somebody
and i'm going to be successful in life
peace out

-Lil' Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: With your heart and a little determination, everything you want them to know — it shall be so!

How I Feel

between the walls
is where i've been
for the past few months
no more getting drunk
only taking a hit off the blunt
no need to front
i'm just writing how i feel
it's already '04
and the murder rate isn't getting low
it's actually getting higher
so instead of shedding tears
would rather take a flick off the lighter
and close your eyes
and let it take you higher
over the past years
many did shed tears
for all my peers
that fell victim to the streets
rest in peace

-Edwin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Congrats on planning to leave alcohol behind, 'cause it's true that it messes with your mind. You say it's linked to the murder rate, and who's to say it isn't so? It diminishes impulse control in teenage frontal lobes, for sure! But do you really think smoking a blunt's the cure?

**over the past years
many did shed
tears
for all my peers**



Opportunity Passed Me By

Being locked up, and even when I was on the outs, I've missed opportunities. I've missed multiple opportunities, because I've been locked up.

Being locked up, I'm unable to see my brother and unable to show my family my progress toward becoming a man. I've missed opportunities to be me, to get educated the way I am supposed to.

But the most important opportunities I missed, was when I was at home. I missed spending the last days of my grandma's life with her! 'Cause I was too busy doing my thang.

Now I regret all the missed opportunities. But I know there's a reason; I had to learn some way, so I guess God, whoever he may be, taught me like this. And I know whoever will judge me in the end, will know what I was going through. I live in hope that he will forgive me.

-Sho-Moe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Everyday is judgment day. Why imagine it comes only at the end of life? However, if you believe in a loving and merciful God, and you can enter into that spirit, you will be driven to change your ways, driven by remorse and the knowledge that a loving God has forgiven you for yesterday. Such forgiving is an opportunity to change your way of living.

To My Little Girl

as i sit i my cell
i think about my little girl
and how i would give
anything to be with my little girl
as i am in here i feel bad
because my little girl
means the world to me
and as i sit in the cell i have been given
i think of all the things
i could have done with my little girl
my little girl gets older and older
each day that i am in here
so i hope to get out on the fifteenth
so i can be with her
and be there when she needs me
and so i can be a good father
so while i am in here
i think about my little girl

-Violent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel the love for your little girl in every line of this poem. But if you want to put her at the center of your life and not just the center of your thoughts in here, then it's time to bury your violent ways in the past. Your little girl needs a father who is dependable, responsible and peaceful. To be that good father, what it would take? What would you change?

The System

I think the criminal justice system gives teens another chance to look back on their past or to help them and let them know that they are heading the wrong way, and that their life is about to end.

If there was not a criminal justice system, the world would not be the way it is today. The crime rate will be up. There will be no peace. People will just be killing each other whenever they were mad with one another just because they know they will get away with it.

No one would have an education. We would not have anything to live for because there will not be any law and you have to have rules to flow and to succeed in life. So that's why I think the criminal justice system is a successful program for teens and adults.

-Twin, Virginia

From The Beat: You point out the good parts of having a criminal justice system. This is something many people locked up don't see. There are many problems with the system that need to be remedied. What are some details you would change if you had your own juvenile institution or you were a lawmaker? This didn't get here in time to print in the system issue but your voice is being heard loud and clear. Keep expressing your thoughts and feelings.

At The Front Door

We fight every night now
That's not kosher

I reminisce

With bliss

Of when

We was closer

You was suppose' to be
My little taste of paradise

Amidst all this hell

I go through

With little haste

I ignore the advice

Of even my father

I said to myself

Hell, I'd show you

What's it like

To be with

A real man?

A real fan of love

And all its aspects?

Thought you wasn't

One of those

Superficial dames

That play bullshhh games

For notoriety and assets

In past sets

I had no problem

Paying what I weighed

'Cause I knew

I was to get some play from that

But you wasn't

What I expected

At a time when life

Was so hectic

You managed

To take me away from that

Thought you were a diamond in the rough

I would buff away the negative shhh

So the whole world could see you shining

Found out I gotta keep grinding

Because to keep you cloud nine

I'd have to buy the silver lining

So on this special day

Where we're suppose

To re-ignite our old love

I have to realize

There's nothing knew with you

One thing for sure

Ain't two for certain

I love you, but baby

I'm through with you

-Donta, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a tight poem about love that isn't real. How many times have we seen people love for all the wrong reasons? Are you guilty of ever being with someone for the wrong reasons too? There is so much pressure to have money and make money. How will you make it the right way and say, "forget it" to all those who pressure you or to all who are shining that you envy? Further your education, Donta. You have so much talent already, hone it!

**I love you, but baby
I'm through with you**



Back in the Summer

I was sixteen, riding in scrapers with my potnas. We had loaded water guns ready to shoot at the females.

We rode past this Mall, and we seen these females. They were like four or five deep. We stopped to talk to them, and then we started to shoot at them. Then we pulled off.

That's what the summer is all about! You see the ladies, and you have your water guns — and you gon' shoot at them. That's what we do in my 'hood.

One time I was walking down my street, and then some females rode past me. I was fitted, too! Then they pulled out their water guns. First they stopped and said, "Oooh, look at him! He is cute!"

Then they started to shoot at me! I was mad because I was dressed up, fitted. — It's gon' crank this summer, folks!

-Lee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wish to high heaven the 'hood was filled with water guns only, and those that get shot just get wet when it's hot. And we wish hot just meant the weather! You were mad 'cause you were fitted, but now you think it's funny. It's basically harmless fun. Thanks for sharing it with everyone.

What I See In the Hood

when i stare outside of my window
i see a ghetto street near me
i see scrapers riding past
with loudspeakers in it with spinners spinning
out my window i see the turf thugs
out there blowing on dat blunt
get dat paper on the corner
i also look out my window
and i see them boys riding past
just ready to bust someone on that hot turf
what i see outside of my window
females walking with mini-skirts
while boys riding in their scrapers
with their water guns squirting at them

-Lee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You paint a picture of your world with a teenage viewpoint in your words: spinners, speakers, dope dealers, killers, blunts, and girls. You end on a note of simple fun, on which you elaborate in the other piece you've done. But you don't seem to see boys and girls walking to school, or mothers with groceries, or busses bringing folks home from work. Is the world you describe all that exists in your eyes?

It's Not Just Time

As I sit in my cell, the most important thing that comes to mind is what's passing me by on the outside world as I'm just an inmate, and it is my time.

With all that time passing by, it takes all my goals that I have and makes it seem as if the more time that I waste, the longer it's going to take to reach them — things such as having my own family, house, business, and plain being happy.

When your freedom gets took, they take more than anybody can ever imagine, things that you never realized that you took for granted.

-Julio, 150 Crew

From the Beat: Julio, we feel ya. Especially in the Hall, the most important thing is time. Of course questions come to mind like, "How much time do I have and how will I spend my time?" So, what are you thinking? Sometimes in life we need a timeout to strategize, then get back in the game, the game of life that is. You seem to have your goals already set. What's your plan?

Wishes

When I look out my window, I wish I could be at home with my girlfriend and my family. My life is falling apart when I am not free, so I use my time to think about the things I've done.

So now I am in this room looking at this window that I can't see out of. Sometimes I really want to go home. I miss my family, friends and everything I used to do.

-Wishing, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for keeping it real and putting your emotions down on paper. How can you make your future brighter and greater? How can you make sure you don't come back to Juvenile Hall? How can you make a good life for yourself outside of those four walls?

Wish I Was Out There

when i look out my window
i wish i was out there
not in here
i wish i was going to school
comin' home to my loving mom and dad
my girlfriend, my lover my soul
being in jail makes me think
about what i did
i made a mistake
a mistake
i would never make again
because behind
these four walls
and this little window
i've realized
there's so much to live for
i wish i was out there
not in here

-Mike, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometime it takes a knock on the head to get our attention. Now you know what's really important in life, and it's not whatever you were chasing when you made that mistake! So get it right and give yourself a break.

When I look Out The Window, I Wish . . .

I was on the other side,
But I can't get out. Believe me I've tried,
Someone thinks I belong in jail,
My only link to the outside is mail,
Every day I patiently wait,
In a numb, cold, silent state,
I go to court and hope for the best,
And leave the judge to decide the rest,
What can I do to change my life?
How can I stop all this pain and strife?
I don't know how to get on my feet,
If I could it'd be so sweet,
All this leads to self-sabotage,
I was found by the 5.0 hiding in my garage,
So here I am once again,
Because my life is full of sin,
Maybe this time will be the last,
Hopefully all this crime can be in my past.

-Ashley, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ashley, you really stepped up with this piece. Who thinks you belong in jail? Do you? What can you do to change your life? What is it about your life that you need to change? Only you can answer these questions and come up with the solutions.



Passed Me By

Since day one I've been in foster care and off to a bad start. I was moved from home to home, family to family, placement to placement. Since I was nine years old I was left to support myself and be my own.

So what I'm saying is everything that goes with being a kid I never really got. I always been forced or more like expected to be grown. I never got to be carefree, and when I tried, it put me in the system at the age of twelve and now I'm 17. So I missed out on all the stuff kids do and all the fun experiences teenagers go through and that I heard my friends talk about.

The worst part about of it isn't what I couldn't control, but all the stuff I had control of but still messed it up.

-Daniel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes we learn the biggest lessons from our darkest days. Although it may seem like one bad thing after another is being thrown at you, there is a light at the end of every tunnel. Think of it like this, in the future you can give the things you didn't have to your children and show them a better life. Can you feel that? What do you think you can do right now to get yourself out of the system?

When I Go Home

when i look out my window
or should i say
when i be out on my home visits
i be wishing that i can stay at home
and just don't have to worry
about coming back to camp
at a certain time
when i be finally into something
it be time for me to go back to camp
and when i be on my way to camp
i get a headache and feel like damn
here goes another vacation
to j-cat and mark
here we go again

-Lil' Shawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Of course it's hard to come back to Camp, but it teaches you the discipline you'll need to go to work or to school and do what you need to do, even when you don't really feel like it. At least it'll feel easier than the days you had to come back to Camp, right?

Metamorphosis

Changing over, a metamorphosis
from one mind state to another
I can't see until the light comes on
Swallowed by lies of racial adversity
I fall, I fall into a void of shame
For my own naiveté, now it's mercy me
The fear of old man winter
Washed away by the warmth of a kitchen stove
With faith measured I run blindly back
And again am attacked by the cold
Memories, embarrassing
A lane of shame, I wish not to walk
What tomorrow brings, I can only dream
And I am lost again to the power of thought
Where am I at when I need myself?
Building a state for the self to come

-Brixx, Virginia

From The Beat: This is very professional and original work! It's abstract and full of meaning and mystery. What shame do you have and how can you work through it? How can you come back to being aware of the present moment so that you do not flood your mind and become overwhelmed? Do you ever feel like you are losing yourself? Some believe the self is constantly changing and some believe in "One self" and an interconnectedness that is not realized because we are divided by illusions. What do you think?

Just Think

Well everybody that knows me knows that I write to The Beat every week with a love poem or two. But this week I am kind of down because I had some bad news at court.

They're trying to do your boy Tramaine, but that is a whole different story. So this is what I'm about to write is a friendship poem. So I hope you'll like it, so here it goes . . .

To A Friend

God's wisdom is perfect
He created you at just the right time
And placed for many special reasons
But the one that means so much to me
Is that he created you to be my special friend
To walk with me and hold my hand through thick and thin
To love me and be with me to the very end
To that special friend, this is for you

-Tramaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a really nice poem. Your words touch people. Despite what you are going through, you think of others and you are grateful. This is very inspiring. We hope you receive better news on your next court date. We look forward to you next piece.

Sending me to Juvenile Hall does not change me — it just makes it worse.

Just Makes It Worse

I came in her over some stupid shhh, telling my teacher to kiss my ass, but they did not have to send me to Juvenile Hall, they could have just sat down and talked to me, but they did that.

I missed out on having fun with family and friends and going to school just having a lot of fun. But I'm stuck in here. I was getting good grades and everything, but it did not matter. But when I get out, I'm going to step up to my action and learn to control myself. I will learn not to do bad things.

Sending me to Juvenile Hall does not change me — it just makes it worse.

-Jamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you think that you would have learned the same lesson if someone just sat you down and talked you rather than send you to Juvenile Hall? How will you learn to control yourself?





I've Missed . . .

Some things that I think I have missed is my family. I've only been in the Halls for two months. I haven't seen my family for about a month. I missed my mom's birthday. I've missed my brother growing up. I miss my stuff. I miss my baby; I miss my freedom; I miss outside food.

Instead of being in the Hall, I could be making money, getting smarter so my future will turn out good.

-Missed Out, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How can you make it so that you don't miss out on these precious things anymore? And how can you make up for what you've missed out on?



Desert Sentence

(Lines composed on hearing about a desert sentence.)

Hot and very dry, the sun shinin' very hard in the sky,
You want some shade 'cause you feel like you gonna die.
All you keep feelin' is heat when you close your eyes,
You try to run, but you know you can't hide.

Why would they place you in a place like this? It ain't right

-Tramaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds like a placement in Nevada or something. This piece really makes us feel the heat and discomfort. Do you have any choice over this? Do you think they put this place in the desert so people won't run? Could you use this environment as an incentive not to run?

A Giant Lie

Well, this is not a topic, but I'm about to tell you what I'm in here for. Two weeks ago I was lied on. A girl said me and three of my friends done messed with her at school. We were all charged with a felony. Last week, two of them were released because it was their first offense. Me and my other friend are still here. I'm going to court on the 16th of April, hopefully I get released.

She told a big GIANT lie on us. I say if we were to take a lie detector test, I would pass and she wouldn't. She lied on all three of my friends and none of them wasn't even there. The only thing I did to her was wet her with a bottle of water and she got mad and lied. I don't know why but she did. One of them used to go out with her, but then he dumped her and she got mad and lied on him, but he was one of the two that got released.

I'm just in here stressing because I didn't do the crime, but I'm paying the time. Her grandma told her to say a whole bunch of stuff that wasn't even true at all. With her bottle of water, she wet one of my friends at school, but he didn't tell no lie or press charges on her. I just hope I get released on the 16th so I can go back to school where the police took me out of class. My grades in school are good, but I been here lately so I don't know how it really looks now.

I don't know why she said all those lies for, but if karma is what goes around comes around, she is going to get in some trouble that she didn't do, like when she told a lie on us. Yeah, they are going to believe her 'cause she is a girl and we're guys, but all the things she said were lies.

She is my fellow classmate. I don't know what happened. I was just playing, throwing a little water at her, but I didn't know she was going to do all that because she was my friend. But I guess she was humiliated, so she told a whole bunch of lies to get her own friend in four-wall cell. I thought she was my friend.

-Davin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that everything works out for you and things straighten out. People are very different, some are more sensitive than others and we all have different boundaries. One man's joke is another man's ridicule. How can you make sure this doesn't happen to you again?

I look out my window I wish I could see a better view

A Better View

I look out my window; I wish I could see a better view
I wish I could see all of my ninjas doing better, too
I wish I could see things that I never do
Instead of little kids trying to pack Berettas too
I wish I could see everybody off drugs
They could have caught a football, but the ninjas caught slugs.
We were taught shooting and killing; we were never taught love.
We rather talk about money and drugs
I wish I could see everybody legit
Instead of bullets going through a body and shhh
Rather than pens and pencil, it's shotties they hold tight.
Ninjas will kid 'nap yo' kids and probably ya wife.

-Laron, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a cold world out there, but your life doesn't have to be. Change starts with you. Can you start by not following the crowd and following your heart instead? You can't just sit there and wish, you have to put in some action. Where do you think you can start?

she told a whole
bunch of lies
to get her own
friend in a
cell. I thought
she was my
friend.



The Cell Of Hell

As I sit here in this cell, lonely as hell
Wondering, why the hell, in my jail
thinking to myself
why did I do this to myself?
all I can do is sit here lonely as hell
'cause what I did was stupid and dumb
and now I realize that all I'm doing
is putting myself through hell.
I wish I had bail
but I'm a minor so all I can do is think about what has
passed since I first seen this place of hell.

-Michael, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As you sit and think, do you dwell on the past or do you try to plan to make the best of your future? What changes do you need to make so that your whole life doesn't pass you by?

Sorry moms for letting you down

The Game

Man, this game is a mutha. Man, you can't trust it no further than you could throw it. A ninja be ready to die at any given time for the game, and what do it do for me?

Man, the game done got a young ninja two felonies and one strike that won't seal. A young ninja done got shot, shot people, and swore up and down that the game/'hood, wasn't gon' let me get sent up.

But that's what I get for being blind, 'cause I'm 'bout to hit Glen Mills for a hot one. RIP Fred-Fred, Reem, Bra Bra Lee, and Joe Cheez.

-Young Cd B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Honest, real piece, Cd. Now that you have experienced some of the consequences of the game, and see things more clearly, what's next for you? What are you going to do with your time at Glen Mills? Where do you want to be when you leave there? What do you want for yourself when you get back?

Missing You

This shhh is like a roller coaster going through my mind.
A life of endless ups and downs,
kinda sounds like mine.
Fightin' hard through all this pain,
Man, I think I'd rather die.

This is sometimes how it feels while you're livin'.
Day by day, I'm steady wishin' for the people that I've lost,
sometimes I feel like cryin' but the tears don't ever fall,
and life, it seems so hard, and I'm steady goin' down,
I wish that I could turn back time, just to have you all around.

Sometimes it's hard to carry on

Yes, it is

Sometimes I feel like I'm alone

Yes, I do

At times these nights seem so long

'Cause I'm missing you

-Brian, Virginia

From The Beat: Your metaphor of life being a roller coaster is very well written and explained. We are sorry for all the losses that you have endured. And "endured" is the key word. You have made it this far, Brian and you can keep on going. How can you live a life that is more meaningful? Read The Beat, think of the millions of people feeling lonely the same time you are, and remember this loneliness and hard times won't last. It may feel like you are alone, but you are definitely aren't.

Don't Pass Me By

My life
All the stuff I used to do
Just kicking back with my friend
Drive around
Going to parties
I miss my lil' niece
She's two
She's like my only child
She hugs me and stuff
When I visit her
And it makes me sad in here
I miss my lil' sister
She's eight
I miss playin' wit' her
Sitting down watching TV
Especially cartoons
My mom I miss
Driving around with her
Going to work with her
She takes care of old people
I miss doing the good and the bad stuff
I was in my group home a couple of weeks ago
I ran
I been away from home for four months
I couldn't take the group home
I ran to be with the people/my friends
I'm 15
I been in the system since 2001
Man, I trying my best to get out
I'm going back to the group home
I'm going to try and work it out
Sorry moms for letting you down
I know you want me out of the system
I'm trying my best

-Terrence, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good job with this topic. What will be the hardest part about getting out of the system? Why do you think so many folks get caught up and can't find a way out? How do you plan to make up for lost time with your family? How can you be a role model to your little sisters?

Heartaches and Headaches

when i sit in my cell
i wonder what all my friends are doing
i especially wonder about my family
i worry about who's safe
and who's accomplishing
i also think about what
might i be doing or accomplishing
it's kind of sad
i get heartaches and headaches
because of thoughts

-Robert, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe the heartaches and headaches are trying to tell you something about the same old mistakes you continue to make. We don't mean — get your game tight. We mean — get your life right!

This shhh is like a roller coaster going through my mind.



Sarkastix's Page

Questions

Crazy people
Often say how well
They're doing
Why is it that we sane people
Seem to complain about everything
It's like how the poor
Dream to be rich
But the rich would rather be poor
Please someone help 'cause I'm so mixed up
I need to know what's right and what's wrong
But I am blind
And Beat,
How can I be dyslexic?
And if I am so dumb
Then why do you lie to me
And tell me I'm smart?

-Sarkastix , 150 Crew

From The Beat: You got a lot of questions here. We don't have all the answers, but most people tend to think the grass is always greener on the other side, which probably explains all the confusion. We've never heard of a dumb person asking so smart many questions. Plus, The Beat doesn't lie. What would be the point?

Counting Z's

I sit at a table,
with pencil in my hand,
paper in front of me,
topics set out for me,
and yet I have nothing to say.
I am confused,
I can't think straight.
My mind is racing a mile a minute.
Thoughts run through my head,
but nothing makes sense,
I know I can do it,
I just know I can.
But I find more
comfort is keeping to myself ,
So I sit in here in silence,
pencil in hand,
maybe I'll write now,
but soon too late.
So I sit in silence,
without a pencil,
losing myself in a deep contemplation.
I like it here,
it's a lot more soothing.
Thoughts are a comfort,
maybe I'll write next time,
maybe,
but for now I'll just think.

-Sarkastix , 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is an interesting piece. Writing is really about thinking, a tool to help develop your thoughts. Will we get to read what you came up with in this last contemplation session? We look forward to it.

**Thoughts are a comfort,
Maybe I'll write next time**

Love Words

If love is love,
Then how can it be true?
And if you love me,
Do I love you?
It's simple questions like this,
We ask day after day.
When shielding our feelings,
By the nothings we say.
I don't know how to say it,
But I'll try to explain.
And though hard to tell,
It still comes out the same.
If love is love,
And love is true,
And if you love me,
Then I love you.

-Sarkastix , 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice poem. Love is a confusing thing, just like this poem. Are you writing this to someone specific? If so, you should share it with this special someone, if not, well, thanks for sharing with us. We love ya.

Identity

Please keep it to yourself,
The secrets you know.
I don't want anyone to find out
who I truly am.
I have tried so hard
to cancel my identity
I would hate for someone
to crack this vase,
I am of no one's importance,
So why do you care so much?
I cannot be fathomed,
so why must you try to contain me?
I am like an un-worshiped God
raised in the highest of heavens
only to slave away in
the low courts of earth.
I am a no one.
Please take these secrets to the grave,
for I am death,
and cannot be understood.

-Sarkastix , 150 Crew

From The Beat: Intense piece. What is it really about? It flows nicely, but we are a little bit lost. Who are you? Who are you writing to? Tell us more. Help us understand.

Oblivion

Oblivion
is bliss,
death like a kiss
from an angel's lips.
I drink the blood of a thousand demons,
a devil in the high heavens,
someone not to be trusted,
messenger of the people,
yet entirely un-human,
tormented by God,
blessed by demons.
I am a man of a noble birth
raised only for death,

-Sarkastix , 150 Crew

From The Beat: Okay Sarkastix, we are feelin' you, but what are you talking about? Take us on a longer journey into your world. Is this really about you? A feeling you have? We want more.



My Letter To The Kids Who Lost Their Fathers

My letter to both of the fathers would probably be the same. I would bring up the positive things their fathers have accomplished instead of the negative.

I would explain it is very difficult to grow up without a dad, from experience my dad was killed too. I would also tell them God had this plan for a reason, because there is always a reason and it was probably their time to go to heaven.

I would also tell them to pray for their fathers. Finally I would say sorry and hope that they get through this.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a very well thought out response to those children who lost their fathers. We are deeply sorry for your father's death, Abbas. What a difficult situation to go through as child. We would like to know how you cope with your father's death. What do you think God's plan and reason were for you? Many prayers to you and your loved ones.

Abbas And Telefaros Page

A Letter To My Lost Child

I'm sorry my life with you had to end like this. But like they say, "You never know when God is going to take you." So live every day like it's your last.

So my fatherly advice to you is: (1) Always mind your mom. (2) Stay in school. And (3) respect yourself and everyone around you. My sweet daughter, I just wanted to let you know that I love you and that you will always have a place in my heart.

Sincerely yours, Daddy.

-Telefaro, 150 Crew

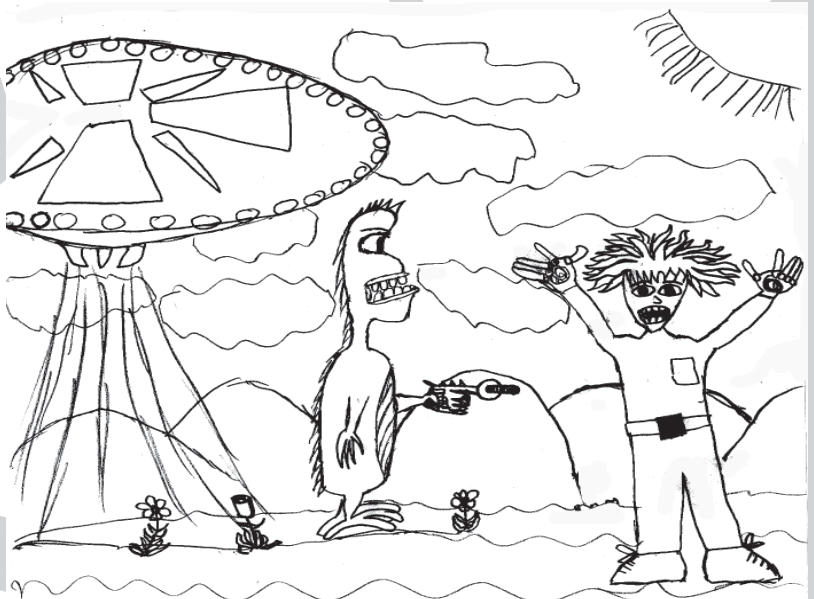
From The Beat: Very creative and heartfelt letter to the child that lost her father. You can imagine that it would be hard on you and your child to lose each other and how heartbreaking it would be. You mentioned possibly being a father. You can be the father that your child needs. Get help when you need it because being a dad is

Reality

when i look out my window
i see a nice and beautiful day
when i look out my window
i see another way to change
when i look out my window
it is a shame
to see us black people struggling
when i look out my window
i see greed selfishness
and other negative things
when i look out my window
all i see is you and me
but wait —
thank god for letting me breathe

-Telefaro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When we look in The Beat, we see Telefaro's piece. Whether it's an essay or a poem, he tells us what's going on, week after week — both the sour and the sweet.



like they
say, "You
never
know when
God is
going to
take you."

Missing Out

I've missed out on a lot of things since the day I got locked up.

I missed my birthday and I turned 17 in juvenile hall.

I also missed my sister's engagement.

I've missed out getting a real high school diploma.

I've missed the opportunity to make a lot of money from my job by being locked up.

I've missed out on a lot of my dreams of becoming someone important,
but I don't think it's too late for that.

Some things I wouldn't get back because it was a one-time thing.

Finally being incarcerated made me miss out on a lot of things, but it also helped me make better decisions in life.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You missed a lot of things, Abbas but it sounds like you ultimately gained from this experience. We hope that your time will be short because we have faith that you are going to lead a different life when you get out. Use us as a resource while you are locked up and when you get out.



Boog Money 's Page

Oh Faithful

Oh faithful is not being here
Oh faithful is when the doors disappear
Oh faithful believes in the things that are not feared
Oh faithful is the things you see that are balled up in tears.
Oh faithful is a word that might sound weird
Oh faithful is an issue among my peers
Oh faithful made me realize and admit my fears
Oh faithful came to me in a dream and told me life is full of tears
So keep Oh faithful to the heart and pray for all your tears.
'Cause by any means possible and that make Oh faithful weird
But once again Oh faithful is the things that are not feared.

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Faith is a word that has many different meanings to many different people. It can also be a way for us to have hope in situations that we deem hopeless. It doesn't have to be feared but it has to be respected.

So progress on more achieving and less bleedin'.

No Happiness

I'm in the Halls where there is no happiness
I'm mad, you mad, but we mad for similar reasons
No happiness comes from the bad part of the spring season
When you're not around your family to pursue the things you believe in
But my "no happiness" comes from the things I be needin'
But no happiness — it's nothin' to start bleedin'
'Cause it makes you mad and madness is not a friend.
So progress on more achieving and less bleedin'.

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you think about it, happiness comes to those who wait for the storm to pass. We see loads of that here in this office. People walk in and they have been down for years. The happiness inside them began inside the walls they were enclosed in and followed them out because they found peace within themselves first. Think about it.

Thinking

I'm sittin' here thinkin',
but how I know I'm thinkin' when my hearts steady blinkin'?
Worried about the system and the stuff that they be drinkin',
but I'm behind these locked doors so my dream began to weaken.
That's the reason I'm always thinkin'
they want me to be quiet for the things I believe in.
Am I wrong for the things I be seein',
but only to go back to begin my thinkin'.
To stand strong to my goal it can never be beatin',
but being behind these locked doors makes a child's soul weaken.
I guess that's why they say jail is a process of thinkin',
but you know what, I can't stop dreamin',
that's why I'm always thinkin'
to be free so my soul won't be weaken.

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is no need to be quiet about the things you believe in. That would not be being true to who you are. One thing to always remember is that you control what you think and feel, but if you allow the system to control those two things, then you just might get lost in the shuffle. Don't let your dreams weaken, let them steadily grow stronger as you turn them into a reality — regardless of where you are.

Doors

Doors close and more are supposed to open,
but it feels like doors are locked
and the rest need tokens.
I'm wishin' the doors were broken
wit' a crack,
so my dream can turn golden,
but being on the run is a little too outspoken.
These doors are locked but I feel in my heart they're
bound to open,
but it's these the doors I've chosen.
Doors lockin' make a cat start focusin',
but The Beat Within is a Juvenile Hall spokesman.
Are these doors locked
to be a turning point of focusin'?
'cause shortly and shortly the doors are closin'.
I say this for boys and girls,
this is not something we chosen
so stand tall and keep the doors from closin'.

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The doors of our lives open when they feel we are ready. Even cell doors. Doors close to help us see our mistakes when we move too fast. Try not to be in too much of a hurry to get through those closed doors, because they might be closed for a reason.

Doors lockin' make a cat start focusin', but The Beat Within is a Juvenile Hall spokesman.

Notta Dream

It's notta dream there in the
county twistin' ya ear
It's notta dream in the county with no care
It's notta dream in the county with these folks
It's notta dream in the county tryin' to smoke
It's notta dream in the county tellin' folks
It's notta dream there,
when your pockets feelin' broke
But it's a dream when you're hopin' for the most
It's notta dream when ya life is on a rope
It's notta dream there when
you're posted sellin' dope
But it's a dream there when
you wishin' fo' some hope
But it's a dream there
when you're changin' fo' your folks

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So which are you gonna hold on to? The dream or the notta dream? If you hold onto the dream, then you have something to look forward to, but if not, then you lose hope and that's when it all turns sour.

I guess that's why they say jail is a process of thinkin', but you know what, I can't stop dreamin'



The Things I Miss

I've been here seven times and I miss all kinds of things, like Fourth of July and New Year's. And when I got sent to a group home, I missed my birthday. I missed the prom and some of my friends' graduations, because I was locked up.

-Lil' Reese

From The Beat: Seven times. That's a lot of times to be locked up. Do you regret it? What else is going to pass you by if you keep living this way? Do you have the power to prevent this from happening?

Weeks Have Passed

Me sitting here in Juvenile Hall Jail — it hurts that I'm here because I know what I've done for me to wind up here was too long and not a good enough reason. I won't go into details.

Me being here — it's weeks that have passed me by, maybe my family has passed me by! I'm almost missing my prom, but I think I'll make it, thank God. [To be continued.]

-Tavaris

From The Beat: Turn the pain to gain, by learning the lesson that will insure you never have to return here again.

"Passed Me By"

I Miss Out

I miss out on family holidays, a big part of my life, my lil' sister, and lil' brothers. I'm missing out on school, I'm missing out on my niece being born, I'm missing out on a lot of things while I'm in Juvenile Hall.

-Ma

From The Beat: We hope that you can catch up on some of these things before they completely pass you by.

Not A Lot Of Good Passing Me By

Everything is passing by when I'm in my cell. You'll never get most of these things back. That's a good thing to me. Most of the stuff I'm missing would get me in here.

There's not a lot of good passing me by. The only good I'm missing is having freedom and a door that doesn't lock behind me.

-James

From The Beat: Sounds like the life you were living was not as meaningful as you would like. How could you make your life more meaningful? Have you thought about furthering your education, getting a steady good paying job, meeting someone, and starting a family one day? This can all pass you by if you continue living with anger. It's difficult to continue living after losing someone as special as your father but you got to do this for you, your father's memory and all your loved ones.



My Life Passed Me By

As I look at it, my life has passed me by. It all started when I was nine. I got put into a group home and was depressed for some time. Sometimes staff would tell me to cry, but at nine years old, I thought it was a waste of time.

Birthdays passed, and now I'm fifteen. On my birthday, I was sent home. Finally released! Now I'm sixteen and I'm in the Hall, caught a case — vandalism, that's what it's called. Because I caught a case, I spent my seventeenth birthday in the Hall.

When I slip and fall, I don't get up — I crawl. So when I get out, do what I do, and stand tall!

-Picasso

From The Beat: If by stand tall you mean you refuse to change; then you're bound to fall again. You can't change the past, but why volunteer to watch your life pass by while you're stuck in the system?

Jezze

nothing has passed me by
i passed it
(except my childhood)
forget the past and the future
and all of you
— when i look out my window
i wish i could see
through it

-Emaliija

From The Beat: We wish you could see through the window onto your future, your several possible futures — so that you could make wiser choices in the present! Don't take your anger out on yourself like this.

What Has Passed Me By

What has passed me by in the outs:

Getting high every day
making money
robbing people
breaking into cars
going to functions
scrapin' the town
busting heads
slanging rocks
packing pistols
hanging out on the turf
my family
just life.

-D

From The Beat: Funny how you mention your family last. Exactly what are your priorities? Are you sure they're straight? 'Cause it sounds like what's passing you by should pass you by, otherwise, a lot more will be passing you by for sure.

**When I slip and fall,
I don't get up — I crawl.**

I'm Missin' Alot

It's a lot of stuff I'm missin' out on, like my child and my life of freedom, being able to do what I want and being with my family and loved ones.

But more than that, I'm missin' out on being there for my lil' one and my wifey.

-Dante

From The Beat: How can you be a good father to your child? What kind of lessons do you hope to teach your child? How can you be supportive towards your baby's mom?

**when i look out my window
i wish i could see through it**

Reflectin'

As I sit in my cell, I have time, time to think and reflect on my life. Yet the world on the outs keeps turning. I missed so much on the outs being locked up in this place.

I missed my prom and my graduation. What a bummer. I tell you, if I wasn't locked up, I would have went to my prom and stunted on all these broads, 'cause my dress was going to kill them. It was going to be custom-made. Being in this hell made it all impossible 'cause if I wasn't in here, it would have been a wrap.

I tell you, I would have been unstoppable 'cause these broads was going to be mad, but lucky for them I ain't out.

-Lil' Mama Hanna

From The Beat: Watch out! Lil' Mama Hanna comin' through! What kind of plans do you have for the future? When are you going to get the chance to get that custom-made dress? Tell us more about that great night. Unstoppable! Take us on that journey with you.

My Cell Emotions

Sittin' in my cell,
My life is passin' me by,
I'm so used to this shhh,
I don't have time to cry,
Sometimes I look at the sky,
And wonder why,
I keep coming back here,
Seeing the same-ass faces,
It's a damned shame,
We used to the same-ass places,
When would shhh change?
It won't. It'll always be the same
I hate this system, it makes me sick,
All the judges and DA's in it is to get rich,
I can't do this shhh.
All I could do is stay a bad . . .

- Lil' Mama

From The Beat: Lil' Mama, you say you hate being in the system, but that you keep coming back. Since the system isn't going to change, what can you do to change yourself and how you live your life so you won't keep returning? Will staying a "bad . . ." help you stay out or bring you back in?



"Passed Me By"

Easter Passed

Well, what's up? This the homie, Green Eyes, writing from max. Things that passed me by were Easter this year, and I also missed out on Thanksgiving and spending it with my family.

I missed out on being on my block postin' with the homeboys and drankin' on some 40 oz. I missed out on being at home with my little sister and goin' to my aunts. I missed out on being with some females. I'm out . . .

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: It's sad that things are passing you by so quickly. What can you do so that you'll be able to enjoy future holidays with your family?

Time Passin'

When I'm sittin' in my room, I think about all my missin' out on. I think about all my potnas I could be chillin' with right now. I could be at a party this weekend, 'cause it ain't no school, so it's probably going to be a big old party on Friday. I should be out with some girls kickin' it at the house, watching TV or something like that.

I shouldn't even be in jail right now, but I got caught up in a wrong situation at the wrong time. I miss being at home 'cause instead I'm in here. I could be enjoyin' the luxuries of life gettin' money and . . . I don't know, doin' something, or playing my PS2 or X-Box with my cousin.

-Young Ant

From The Beat: What about your family? If you were more involved with your family, do you think you'd stay up off the streets? Do you ever find that the stuff you do on the streets is what gets you locked up?

Locked In Time

Life passes me by while I'm stuck in time in the Hall. I feel like I'm locked in an hourglass. The days always go by slow and the only way to make them go by a little faster is by reading hella books, working as a detainee for the county, also writing in The Beat and going to school. That is the only freedom from this insane and negative hellhole.

-Howard

From The Beat: It's a drag to feel like you're in a hellhole, but at least you're using your time productively by reading and writing — they are great forms of freedom. What books are you reading? What are you learning about? Share with us.

Missing Out on Money

I think I am missing out on all the money I could be getting on the outs. And I'm missing out on being on the block everyday!

And I'm missing out on being with my family and being with my friends, getting high and running from the police. I'm missin' out on ridin' out to be with my brothers and see friends poppin' pills and smokin' zips.

-Block Boy

From The Beat: That little bit of money won't buy you freedom when you're in the Y! If you want to be running from the police, then you must want to be caught, too. But why? Don't you know what will happen to you? Slow your roll. You're running out of control.

**I feel like
I'm locked
in an
hourglass.**

Missing The Prom

It's actually kind of ironic that you guys mentioned missing the prom. I have missed the prom two years in a row now!

I don't know why I seem to get locked up at the same time each year. I have been in jail on April fourth of both '03 and '04. I wasted all that money on my tuxedo and on my tickets — and ended up getting locked up both times!

I just pray that maybe next year I can participate in my last (senior) prom. Hopefully, I can keep my head clear and straight, and I will be able to make the right decisions.

-Spring Fever

From The Beat: We heard you say something about missing Thanksgiving, too? So it's not just Spring fever. It goes deeper than that. What keeps bringing you here, and why do you keep putting yourself in situations that bring you here? If it's drugs that are messing with your mind, put them down — at least for a time. 'Cause the high's not worth all the long good-bye's!

Time Freezes

When I come to Juvenile Hall, time freezes to me, because it's like I come here and time stops behind these walls. But on the other side of them walls, the world is going on without me!

It hits me when I think of things like, I was supposed to do this on this day — but I'm in here instead of being where I want to be. Or another thing that gets to me is: You be in here and on the radio they saying, "Oakland is cracking!" or something like that. And I be hella mad!

But now here go a reason I don't trip about being in here: Because I'm a street ninja! Feel me? And it ain't nothin' out in the town I'm missing but funerals. Ya feel me? I ain't tryin' a become a number in the murder rate. Y'all ninjas feel me? And I'm out. RIP Lil' D; P; Marv; Marr.

-Lil' Lacey

From The Beat: So how are you trying not to be another number in the murder rate? You quitting the grind? Staying off the spot? Going to class at school and looking for a real job? We're glad you feel safe on lockdown, but there are better ways than how you're doing it — like safe and free, getting paid legitimately.

Fun Days Pass Me By

I been in-an'-out the Hall, while the world ha' passed me by. I miss many holidays, many birthdays, many fun days. They all passed me by while I was in the Hall.

I'm supposed to be out with my fam' and folks, doing it big this month — 'cause it' (RIP) M-A-T and Ju-Ju birthday! RIP M-A-T & Ju-Ju! MAT was a stunna, one of a kind. He love' to shine all the time. Ju-Ju was a beast; he was a spot smasher. MAT, born 4/25/84; Ju-Ju, born 4/28/84.

-T

From The Beat: Unconditional love ascends to heaven above; and to the earth below, the spirit of love returns with a message you need to know: those who went before, believe it's time for your transformation! Get off the spot and get your education and your degree. Time is wasting. T! RIP MAT & Ju-Ju.

Day By Day

Day by day I feel more and more bad because I miss my life as a teen. As life goes on and as days pass, I miss going to school and my family. This time I say to myself that when I get out, I'm going to change. I have a made up mind and a willing heart.

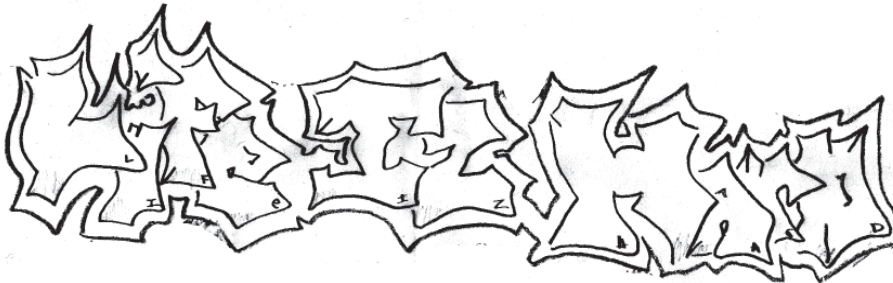
I said to God I am not going to sin no more. But it's not that easy to do, but I'm working on it.

Life is so not fair, but I am working on it to be fair.

-John

From The Beat: What will be the hardest part about the promise to stop sinning? How has God guided you in the right direction?

**I ain't tryin'a
become a
number in the
murder rate.**





"Passed Me By"

The Prom And More

When I am in here, a lot of things passed me by, like the prom, because the prom is going to be on my birthday. And some of my ninjas are graduating on stage in high school.

And when my two big homies passed, it passed me by because I did not get to be with my ninjas before they got killed.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: So now that you're feeling some of what being locked up is costing you, are you willing to change the way you're living? Do you think your dead homies believe that the lifestyle they were living was worth dying so young?

Missin' Out

The way I look at it, no matter where you are, you are going to miss out on something. You can be at home stuck on your homework and miss out on a movie that ends earlier than you thought. Or you can be locked up and miss out on family activities that just pass you by, such as; family parties, family reunions, church prayer retreats, summer activities vacations.

-Lil Boobie B1

From The Beat: But if you go to that movie, you might miss out on finishing your homework and miss out on a scholarship. What things would you place more priority on getting done? Of course by doing anything, we miss out on doing something else. But we still think there's a difference between missing out on a movie because you're doing your homework, and missing out on the world because you're in a cell.

**I'm stuck
in the hall
towards my
high school
graduation.
That's what
passed me by.**

Thinkin'

As I sit in my cell I think about the good and bad things that pass me by.

I sit in my cell and think about all these young soldiers that's getting killed and could have been me, it passes me by.

I am missing out on a whole lot of things.

-Bear B2

From The Beat: How can you avoid being like those young "soldiers"? You know the risks, so what are you going to do to lower them?

Time Passes By While I'm Here

Since I been here I have missed out on a lot of things. My baby sister is five years old, and since I've been here she learned how to speak English good, and how to tie her shoes. My brother that is ten years old finally got the guts to walk to school by himself.

These are the things that I have missed out on. I know that I'll be out soon, and I'll catch up with the changes that had happened since I been here!

-Juicy-Loo B5

From The Beat: These milestones in the lives of your little sister and brother are things that you can never get back, and that is sad. But, of course, there will be many new milestones in their lives that you will be there to see and celebrate — as long as you can remember that missing out on those things by getting yourself locked up is just not worth it.

A Lot

I feel like a lot has passed me by while I've been locked up in CYA. I call home all the time, and they tell me how the babies are getting bigger, started to walk and talk. I've missed weddings, birthdays, baptisms, holidays.

I still got a year-and-a-half till my PCD (Parole Consideration Date) and a few more years till I max out. So I'm going to be missing out on a lot more things, but as soon as I touch down, I ain't trying to get locked up no more. So hopefully I won't miss out on any more special events.

-Lazy GU

From The Beat: You really want to be through with incarceration, Lazy? We're so happy to hear you want to live a free life from now on. What are you going to be willing to do, or not do, to make this dream come true?

Missing My Life

I am missing out on graduating from school, on getting a good job, and missing out on being with my family. But it's my fault that I am up in here, so I can't accuse no one but myself.

I don't want to do the same thing I did before, but now I realize that the main thing I'm missing out on is my life.

-Rebekah GU

From The Beat: Good thinking and good writing. Taking responsibility is a great start; looking for support and making changes on your own is the next step.

Just Do The Time

Life passed me by a lot, twenty-five days so far. I've missed out on a lot of things.

But I can't lie. It's safe in here, feel me. You are locked up in your room most of the day. I be hating that stuff.

I only thought about killing myself one time, to fake my own death just to get out of here. But I thought of I just do the time and get it over with.

My PO trying to send me to a group home. It's cool just do the time and get it over. All right, y'all. See y'all later.

-James B1

From The Beat: While twenty-five days might not be too long in the whole of your lifetime, it is twenty-five days with which you could be doing something else anyway. We know you can't really get time back, but maybe in the future you could think about how much dead time you had in The Halls when you get tempted to do something.

Missing Life

As I sit here watching my four walls, I get pissed because I know I'm missing life.

I missed my Junior Prom last weekend for being stupid, sitting up here missing time, watching life pass me by. I hate it.

-Hating it GU

From The Beat: Is hating what you're missing helping you figure out how you can get out and stay out of this terrible place?

Just Went By

Time just went by
And left without a trace
And I just can't seem to understand
Time passed me by
Like the months and the years pass by
It's hard to accept that I will
Never get it back.

-Estrella GU

From The Beat: Nope, no getting it back, but it did leave a trace. It's been translated into experience, which can be wisdom, if you use it right.

Get Your Stuff Together

I don't trip of what people are doing outside because it ain't nothing new. While the world is doing their thing you got to think about getting your stuff together. So when you get out you can move faster than everybody else. Pass the world by like it passed you.

-Mike B5

From The Beat: Okay, Mike, we think you can get into more details to explain your thinking. We think you're getting a little lazy with your writing (don't get offended...). For example, when you say you have to think about "getting your stuff together," could you tell us how you do that? Or, when you say you'll be moving faster than everybody else, exactly what do you mean? Some people might interpret that to mean you want to be slicker so you can do what you do without getting caught. Of course, we know you well enough to know you didn't mean that (did you?), but your writing should be clearer to make the point.

Messed Up

What I reflect on in my cell is the high school years. How I messed up my freshman and sophomore years.

I started doing good in my junior year, and did very good in my senior year, but for what? I'm stuck in the hall towards my high school graduation. That's what passed me by.

Now whenever I get out I am forced to get my GED 'cause I'll be damned if I got to do another year in high school.

-Cobs B5

From The Beat: What a pity that you will miss your high school graduation. On the same hand, there is nothing wrong with getting a GED. The real test is what you do with what you've got. In other words, it will be up to you to do those things that will let you succeed in life (and not go back to jail), whether you have a high school diploma, a GED, a college degree, or even if you never finished high school! We think you can find that success, Cobs, so don't let a little thing like a GED get you down.

A Part Of My Life

Some of my life passed me by as I sit in my room because time waits for no man. Lil' kids get older and you get older. Your friends get older, but you just got to not let life pass you by.

-Jamoe B4

From The Beat: What will you do when you get out of here to make sure that life doesn't pass you by? How will you stay out of here?

The Biggest Thing

One of the biggest things that I think has passed me by is me being there for my sister to set a good example for her, to be there while she is growing up, and I know that she looking at all the things that I am doing.

So when I leave and go to Colorado, I have to do my program to the best of my ability.

-Young K GU

From The Beat: Yes, you do need to do your program to the best of your ability for yourself and for her. What do you think will be your greatest challenge when it comes to meeting this goal?



"Looking Out The Window"

Spending Time With Moms

When I look out my window, I wish that I was out spending time with my moms. I think about every thing that's passing me by and makes me feel like I'm never getting out of the hall. I mean after time goes by, your like, "Screw it." I wish I did not feel this but what can I say?

Now it's like I don't even look out the window because I ain't never going home but they say I should not think like that. But if you never been through it then don't speak on it.

-D-Moe

From The Beat: We can feel how frustrated you are and how hopeless your situation may seem. It's okay to feel this way. What is it that got in the way of your freedom with your mom? How can you recognize your responsibility in it all? Just as importantly, how can you also understand the different reasons you are incarcerated that were out of your control, for example maybe not having a father figure or alcohol or drug addiction in the family?

Lookin' Back

When I look out my window, I wish...

I wasn't here

I didn't do what I did

I wish I could be home in my bed

I didn't put that punk in his place

I didn't lose control

-James

From The Beat: It is good that you realize the mistakes you have made and feel regret. From the regret, move on and drill it in your head that you can't keep losing your cool. Don't be a slave to your old habits. Find a way to deal with your anger (write more, talk more, breathe more, deal with your grief more...)

Can't Wait

When I look out the window, I wish I will not try to rob nobody when I get out but I haven't learn' my lesson. And I'm gonna want this quick money and sell weed since I did about a dozen applications and they didn't wanna mess with me.

I'ma want the money for clothes, a car, and other good things. For some reason, I can't wait till I get out of college and make money. I want it now.

I probably learn when it happens that' how it is — when I go to jail for a year or two, that's when I will learn.

-Larry

From The Beat: We can see that you did try to make things legit. You need to get more support in finding a job. Check out The Mentoring Center, The Beat offers help and there are job placement services available too. Use your resources in the same way you use them when you hustle and rob, but this time do the right thing. Practice your patience and really look into why you want money so much and can't wait. We don't think a minute of shining is worth years of incarceration and hurting your loved ones and others, do you?

Locked In These Cells

I'm locked in these cells with no freedom, nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. But always thinking about ways to escape from here and my mind. I hate when I'm here thinking or daydreaming about the past.

I wish I could just look towards the future without anything holding me back, but it's impossible. There's always something to throw you off.

You wanna do good, but you can't, especially if you have a past. My past holds me back every day. I been through a lot, and when I say a lot, it's more than you would think if you seen me on the outs. 'Cause even though I been through pain and suffering, I still strive and live day by day.

-Shorty

From The Beat: What is it about our pasts that always seems to catch up to us? Do you think there is a way to just leave the past behind? Or maybe a way we can use our experiences to empower ourselves. What do you think?

I did about a dozen applications and they didn't wanna mess with me.

I Wish

When I look out my window, I wish I wasn't here at all, period! But since I can't change the hands of time and go back to the day when I got caught up, I just wish that I could be out of my room all day.

I hate being in that box with that small-ass window. I think that if I could open my window from the inside or my door was opened all day, I wouldn't stress that much about being in that damn cage.

Sometimes when I look out my window and somebody's talking shhhh, I wish I could open my door and beat the hell out of that person, but I know if I am trying to get out of here I can't whoop nobody, and I know that I have to tame my rage and keep it on a stand by.

-Howard

From The Beat: It's good to have self control. What kind of things do you do to get your mind off your anger? What do you think is the best way to deal with your situation?

With My Mother

When I look out my window, I wish I could see any day with my mother outside of anybody's cell or jail. I want to kick it and put her on rims, have her shinin' in a new house...

-B'z Bow

From The Beat: What a beautiful wish for your mom. Do you think she would rather have you home, free, going to school and poor than buying her stuff? One day you will be with her again.

I Think

When I look out my window, I wish that I was home with my family instead of being in here.

All I see out the window is the sun and the clouds; and I just do a lot of thinking. And I start to pray and think about how if I was out, I could be with my happy family. And I could go back to school because I need to learn and get good grades and just live a happy life.

-Young Lee

From The Beat: Your prayers will be answered because you're willing to do your part. Pray like it all depends on God and act like it all depends on you! Be patient and follow through — then your dreams will come true.

Wishing For My Street Family

When I look out my window I wish...

For the time to fly by

To be with my family and who rode

To role through the streets of my side

This one place to be exact

Where all my family be at

Can't wait to go back

To the home of my click,

And for all my enemy, stay out my head

That's my wish

Hope it comes true

Or I'll make it true.

-Lil' José

From The Beat: Your lines are creative. We wonder why you would wish to be free but also wish for the life that incarcerates you. How can you tone it down? Do you think one day you can find something better to do for yourself and your future? There is love in a click but is this love real if homies lead you into danger and incarceration?

I Wish I Was Out

When I look out my window, I wish I was out. I look and try to put my mind back on the things I used to do when I was out. Sometimes I try to just make the best of being in here and not stress on the things that's going on with me. I also wish that I was with my female doing my do, and I like to put my mind on the outs and just imagine me being with my family, friends, and females. That's just what I see when I look out my window.

-Lil' Lo

From The Beat: Take the time when you look out your window to decide what you need in life to be happy. Is it a name on your turf or is it knowing you won't be going back and forth to jail?

I still strive and live day by day



Thugs And Kids

When I look out my window I see nothing but thugs with guns and selling drugs, and a lot more. I see a lot of females. I also see little kids playing football, basketball, and hide and go get it.

-Star B2

From The Beat: What a dangerous and sad combination. What would you like to see when you look out of your window? When you get out, who will you be?

Feelin' It

When I look out my windows in my scraper, I wish I could see a beautiful place like Hawaii or South Africa. I don't see the beauty in Oakland or San Francisco. I feel it.

-Lil Boobie B1

From The Beat: What kind of beauty do you feel? Do you ever see yourself traveling to one of the places that you mentioned?

I'll Be Back

When I look out my window, I wish that I was at home messing with my girl, kickin' it with my boys, drinking forties, smoking some trees, making money, startin' some funk and smobbin'.

-A-Pon B2

From The Beat: We know that this is what a lot of folks feel, but will you do all of these things once you're released? If so, why even get out then? You might as well save yourself the time and just stay in the Halls.

Out My Window (Dedicated to Lil' Jazzy)

What up Beat? This Jay, and I want to say every time I look out my window I be like, damn, I wish I was out there with my lil' momma Jazzy. I be stressin' like hell in here.

I be lookin' at the white walls for two years. I just be wishin' I was lookin' out my window at my house. So don't trip, lil' momma. I'ma be leavin' on July 23rd. Then we both could be lookin' out the window together.

Man, I'm just tired of goin' through the same thing every day when I wake up.

-Jay Baby B4

From The Beat: Well, Jay, we'll miss you when you go, but we won't miss you so much that we want to see you here again. Now, when you look out your window, you can see the light at the end of the tunnel. It's up to you, now, to make sure this is the last dark tunnel you enter. What are your plans when you get out, besides lookin' out that window with your girl?

Doing Anything

When I look out my window I wish that I can be free at home, on the bed or talking on the phone or going to a girl's house, and just doing anything you would like to do.

-Jerold B2

From The Beat: Isn't doing anything kind of the reason you are locked up right now? What's going to be different when you get home so that you don't come back?

When I Looked Out My Window

I wish I could live in the world and be on mine

Look up and do what I do, and live my life.

This shhh ain't right. That's the way life goes.

-David B2

From The Beat: While you're locked up it does feel like you're being kept out of the real world, but you do live in the world, and you can be on yours. You can do what you need to do and live your life. It all falls on you. What do you need to do to be on yours? What needs to change in order for you to do what you need to do?

"Looking Out The Window"

Freedom Please

When I look out my window I wish I could be coo' wit' my mama, be on the outs, see my girl, be at my house wearing my clean clothes, my PS2, my Jordans, Air Forces, seeing my sister, my dad, mom, brother, money, and food.

When I look out my window, I wish I was free.

-Not Free B1

From The Beat: These are all the things that you are missing out on. Now that you know how that feels, what are you going to make sure you stay free?

Do Over

Every time I look out my window, I wish I'm free. I always think about what happened in my past and hoping that I did the right thing.

I wish I was home with my family, eating my moms homemade Filipino food. I wish I can rewind the time and change everything so I can be with my family again.

-Jomar B2

From The Beat: How much would you change? Knowing that there is no way to do that though, what will you do in the future to avoid going the Halls?

I Wish

When I look out my window, I wish I was on the other side
When I look out my window, I wish I was at home choppin' it up wit' my family
When I look out my window, I wish I could walk down the street and go to the store
When I look out my window, I wish I could have a face-to-face conversation wit' my lil' sis' Salena
When I look out my window, I wish I could give my nieces and nephew a hug
When I look out my window, I wish I could go to heaven wit' my mom so all my pain can go away
When I look out my window, I wish . . .

-Shannon GU

From The Beat: Good writing, Salena. How sad that you wish you were with your mom instead of here with the living. What can you change in your life to make it worth living?

Backtrack

When I look out my window I wish I was home
When I look out my window I wish I was with my homies
When I look out my window I wish I was with my wifey
When I look out my window I wish I could use the bathroom anytime I wanted
When I look out my window I wish I could walk anywhere I wanted without raising my hand
When I look out my window I wish I could stop what I'm doing and not come back

-Wishing B2

From The Beat: Good writing. All these things can happen. What will it take for you to stop wishing these things and start doing them? What is going to keep you from coming back?

I Wish, I Wish, I Wish

When I look out my window I wish to be at home doing the right thing, goin' to school, doin' my thizzile, you feel me? I know I would be doin' it big with the homies, tucked off thrax and all the shhh.

I also wish that I never made the mistake and brought that gun on the bus, 'cause except getting shot, this is one of the worst things that happened to me in all fifteen years I've been on God's green earth. Man, I really regret that day like a mutha.

But moms keep telling me, "You do the crime, then you do the time." But this will all come to an end one day, and I would be back home and the saga will continue.

RIP Fred-Fred, Reem, Ming Lee, and Joe Cheez.

-Young Cd B2

From The Beat: It will come to an end, but when and how? There is no better time than the present if you want to live to have a longer, better life.

Looking Out

When I Look out my window, I wish I was out. I wish I was at home. I wish I was on the block. I wish my homies was alive. I wish I could be with my wifey.

-Jamoe B4

From The Beat: We wish you would avoid the block like the plague. If you go back to the block, it won't be long 'til you're back in some lockup wishing, wishing...

I Wish, I Wish

When I look out the window, I often look back at all the things that I have been through, and I often think about the things I was doing on the streets and think about what could have happened and I kinda thank God that I am locked up.

But then again, I am mad at myself for doing the things that I have done to myself, but I am not trippin', but I am gonna go to Colorado, do my program, and get on with my life.

-Young K GU

From The Beat: Excellent attitude. What do you think has made you more positive about doing your program in Colorado?

I Wish...

To be out with my family and my friends. I wish I can just go back to school and finish my high school, and go to college.

I wish I can just go back and change my dumb move I did that got me here to begin with. I wish that I'll be out and go back to school and go to college.

-Juicy-Loo B5

From The Beat: Of course, JL, you can never go back and undo the past. But at the same time, most of what you are wishing for is still within your grasp. You can go back to school. You can go to college. You can succeed in the way you want without risking your freedom. You can make most of your wishes come true. It's



"Letter To A Child"

Think Twice

Don't care about that cop that got shot because majority of dem think they can hop out they car and harass anybody. Now that's gonna give them second thoughts about hoppin' out they car and harassin' anybody they want.

As fo' da cop that didn't die, he's a sucka for not bustin' back. I think he was probably scared when he seen that chop and heard that engine stop of that town-car.

I guess fo' the cop dat died, now he know who his real homies is. Dat's all I got to say about that.

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: We find your reasoning identical to the system's reasoning. The system executes people to prevent others from committing murder (it's called "deterrence"), even though all the evidence shows it doesn't work. Similarly, you think by executing this police officer, other officers will think twice before they do you dirt. We think your reasoning is as bad as the system's reasoning. Killing people doesn't teach any lesson except that killing people is a solution to a problem. (We've never seen what problem it solves, but we've seen lots and lots of problems that it causes.) We think it's far more likely that, instead of making them think twice about it, the cops will unleash a torrent of abuse and harassment against your friends because of this killing. We wish they would think twice, but then, we wish you would think twice, too.

They All Crooked

What's up Beat? I'm writing to tell you I really don't care about that police officer, because when I got arrested he was doing too much. He just gone grab my arm and stuff.

I told him, "Man, you doing too much, ninja, be easy." I tried to yank away from him and he just gone pull his gun out on me. Now you know I wasn't feelin' that. That's why I don't care, and because they all crooked as hell.

-Black B4

From The Beat: We think there's a big difference between what you know personally (based on your experience with this officer), and what you believe generally ("they all crooked as hell...") We understand where you're coming from, but do you think execution is the appropriate punishment for how he treated you (and others)? If you can feel nothing for a fellow human being (however crooked he might have been) who gets murdered on the street, and, if he could feel nothing for fellow human beings like you that he knew from the street, then is there any hope for peace in the 'hood, in the country, in the world? What can be done to make him and his fellow officers see you as a person with feelings and hardships and a family, and to make you see him and others like him in the same way? And what about his daughter? Should she have to pay the price? What would you tell her?

Police Don't Care About Us

This Jay and I want to say that I really don't care about that police officer that got killed.

The reason why I don't care about him is because he's always tryin' to bully on people. He be pullin' people over for no reason, then he be slammin' them against the car. When he see you havin' trouble, he just gon pass you by.

The police officers don't care about nobody but themselves. They don't care if you killed somebody. As long as they getting' paid it's all cool. So why care about that police officer that got killed?

Now it's like when somebody do something the police ain't takin' no chances. They gon shoot. I know fo' sho the police officers is on a rage, 'cause one of they homies got killed. The police ain't playin' with us no more. They gon shoot us for any wrong reason. So be easy.

-Jay B4

From The Beat: You apparently knew the cop that got killed, Jay, and you think he was a bad cop. We can't really comment on that because we didn't know him, but other people who knew him don't have the same view of him as you. Even if you're right about him, though, does that justify the way he died? Your second point that all cops deserve what they get 'cause they don't care what happens to any of you gives us some trouble. We personally know cops who are doing their best to make the community better. We don't say all, or even most, but some. We worry when we see stereotypes applied to everyone in a group. When it happens to you (when people look only at your "label" — gangster, thug, gangbanger, etc.) — you rightfully object because they can't get past the label to see the individual behind it. They can't really see Jay because of the prejudices they bring to the task. We think by lumping all police officers together under one label, you're guilty of the same thing. Besides all that, you never answered our question: What would you say to the two little girls who are left behind?



About Life

What's up Beat Within? This is Lil' Mississippi speaking my mind. I know everybody heard about the police officer that got shot and I'm sorry to hear that. But what about the millions of black men and youngsters that get killed?

They say he left a three-year-old girl behind, and a gangsta from Richmond got shot too, and also left behind a three-year-old girl behind. But what I want to know is why they was able to catch the man who shot the police the same day, but still haven't caught the man who killed the dude from Richmond?

The police officer little girl got justice for her father death, but the gangster little girl might not ever know who killed her father. See how fast the reaction was when the police died. Now do you see the difference? That's messed up. Think about it.

-Lil' Mississippi B4

From The Beat: There are so many examples you could give to show that the system favors certain people over others. We know that Black people get longer sentences for the same crimes as white people. We know that killing a white person is far more likely to result in a death sentence than killing a black person. We know that in education, medicine, housing, employment, whites have the advantage in this country. Everything you say is true (and worth a Beat topic itself), but there is still something left out, and that is: What would you say to those two little girls?

But what I want to know is why they was able to catch the man who shot the police the same day, but still haven't caught the man who killed the dude from Richmond?

Just Doing His Job

I am from San Francisco where killings just won't stop. I am going to tell you why your father got killed, because these brothers are stupid and they are jealous. I guess your father died because he was doing his j-o-b and getting these killers and drug dealers off the street. I guess the reason they did that because the police was trying to stop the hustle.

-Vernon B1

From The Beat: So the cop was just tryin' to do his job, and dude was just tryin' to get his hustle on. Who wins in this situation? Can you suggest other solutions to the problems that lead to police killing people on the streets, or for that matter, people killing each other on the streets?

I guess your father died because he was doing his j-o-b and getting these killers and drug dealers off the street.



Going To Court

I go to court on the nineteenth. My PO's talking about putting me on EM because my mom wants me home. If the judge don't let me go home, they're gonna put me in another placement. I've been running from placement since I was a young teen.

Placements don't help me, they just get me in more trouble. So, I hope they send me home, because I been doing good in unit two, girl's control. I'm on top citizen like always, but I haven't got in any fights with any of these lil' girls.

-Shorty

From The Beat: Good for you, Shorty. Do you think it is going to be hard to stay on EM? What kind of challenges are you going to have to face on the outs? Anyhow, we wish you the best and even though we love to see you every week, we hope we never see you on the Hall again.

In This Cell

This is a cell
A place of hell
And the place where your future ends
And your sentence begins here
Here's where hell begins
Right here in jail
In this place
But I think back in the days
And I wish I never ended up here in hell
In this lonely cell called jail

-Michael

From The Beat: We can't turn back the hands of time, but we can turn the hands of the future in the right direction.



Placements don't help me, they just get me in more trouble. So, I hope they send me home

Rap-Matic

I'm a rap-matic trash-addict and I'm back at it.
Play me a beat with this heat
I'm a blap at it.

The cats scattered when a Mac's at it.
You don't want a see me punk, get your hat flatted,
Dope like a crack-addict or a hop head,
Dude that got dreads in my bed,
You might see three things, high heels, my pills and females,
I see things through my pimpin' glasses,
Cheezy macaroni teaching pimpin' classes.
I dips and mashes Mercedes Benz's,
Might wear stunnas without the lenses.
I'm off the hinges; I handle business,
No coke defendants,
All by my lonesome,
Won't see Solano, Quentin, or Folsom,
I does 'em at the four-way stop sign,
I rock rhymes, I'm a star,
I'm famous, got my own language,
Cool when I swang it, oh . . .

I'm all out the door,
With the shift on the floor
I rock rhymes from here to New York,
Only smoke 'dro,
No coke or Newport's,
hibachi, Benihana's, pork on my fork,
Rappin' is a sport,
And this is my court,
Do anything to win,
My referees cheat.

I play from foul to bruise to beep,
Read 'em and weep.
I'm a royal flush, give me some 'shrooms,
So I can get much kick dust,
Always in something tight, hella loud,
With the whistles or the suction pipes,
Ask Killo dude, he know,
I'm well connected,
I've been in hella jails, the federals,
But dude it never fails,
The shhhh don't stop.
When I drop,
Hella sales,
Hella mail,
Homie, the postman from Richmond,
Born in Oakland

-M

From The Beat: What are you talking about? You're hella silly. You took us on a journey to Wonderland and dropped us off in Nowhereville. But we enjoyed the ride. Interesting. Tell us more about what you're thinking about (in English), thanks..

Court Date

Today I went to court, and it was all bad. The judge gave me thirty extra days, and I've been here for seven months! When I get out, it's going to be eight months now.

Today, it was my bad luck day. I could've been home smoking some herbs, a whole pound! I would've smoked because it's 4-20 Day today. I think that's why they didn't let me go home. My PO be trippin'! I've been here hella long. I'm hella mad!

So if you come to Camp, just do your program — and don't smoke! And don't trip over staff. That's a short story of being at Camp: "It's pretty easy."

-Sacramento

From The Beat: Hey, Sacramento, that one dirty, in December, came back to haunt you. Of course, that's the real reason they extended your time. But who knows, maybe they release no one with a dirty test on 4-20 Day! It's hard, very hard, to be expecting a release only to see your time extended. Don't let it mess with your program! Time will pass more easily if you don't stress hard.

In My Cell . . .

I sit in my cell thinking of the girl I love
She comes to my heart like the soul of a dove
The look of her eyes makes the joy in me rise
To have her by my side would be a great surprise
I miss holding her in my arms.
I'll do anything to have her close to me.
The love I have for her you wouldn't believe
And I know for sure, it will not leave.
When I get out I'm going to step up to the plate
But I just hope it's not too late
I love this girl named Margarita
She is my baby girl and my mamasita.

-Scarface

From The Beat: This girl cannot wait for you forever. What are you willing to give or give up to be together? What is more important to you — the life that gets you caught up or your boo?

Thankful For

I'm thankful for my grandparents, also for my lovable friend, Melissa, and her mother, also my homies, my turf and my family — you know who you are. One love!

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: How do you show appreciation to your grandparents? Who do you have the most love for?

One Life To Live

Dedicated to the homeboys:

Ay check it out, let me lace all of your boots up. First, we are not supposed to be locked up; we are supposed to get an education and show everyone that we can be something in life, feel me?

Until next time, I'm out folks.

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: What do you hope to achieve in this life? How can you get there? What will be the hardest part about achieving your goals?

So if you come to Camp, just do your program — and don't smoke! And don't trip over staff.



Dear God,

Hey Lord, can I talk to you for a minute? I wanna ask you to please better my life. Every time I think things get worse, they do. I really need your help.

I'm asking you to keep me strong thru this stressful time, I drop to my knees and I pray every day. And I wonder if I'll ever see a better day. It seems like the wicked is pullin' me closer to failure every time I think I'm rising. Just help me, please. I hope you can hear me and answer my prayers.

But hey . . . I know you taught me one thing, gotta learn to get control. Everyone just follow the Lord and who knows where you . . . fa sho' . . . I can see how I been sinnin', I' askin' the Lord for a little bit of forgiving.

-Lil' Ray

From The Beat: God is with you. Keep on praying and pray from your heart. Read your Bible as well if you have one in your possession. Prayer is one of the biggest tools that God has given us. Praying and reading your Bible gives you strength. Keep the faith and "Hold on, change is coming!"

What Would I Do?

what would i do
if i didn't have your love
if i didn't have you
to constantly think of
what would i do
if you really never cared
and every time i messed up
you were never there
what would i do
without you in my life
without you always there
to make things right
i couldn't think of a life
without you
and that's why
i ask myself
what would I do

-Rich

From The Beat: Maybe you'd change and stop messing up, if you couldn't count on someone else to pick you up. That's one philosophy that many have proven true. But why don't you keep the love — and change out of gratitude!

**The other
thing that I'm
about to miss
is going to my
brother's high**

My Life Is Gone

I feel like my life is gone when I'm in Juvenile Hall. I want to live my life on the outs! I think about my family every day.

I'm sorry for all the bad things I did, but I did not realize it until I got locked up. Now my family is passing me by — and school — my job — and a lot of other things that I miss that I would love to be back on the outs to enjoy!

-Young Lee

From The Beat: If your sorrow over the bad things you did extends to a willingness to enjoy your freedoms without repeating those mistakes, you're well on your way toward reclaiming your life — with all its comforts, joys and ambitions.

Fatherless Child

I have known somebody whose father got killed. It was one of my mess-wit-it friends. Her baby daddy got killed two months before she was due and a day before his birthday.

It was sad when I heard the loss, but we got over it, because he is restin' in peace. But otherwise I can't think of any other father that has died with children.

-B'z Bow

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your memories about this topic. Did you have a father or a father-like figure in your life? If not, how could this made a difference and how could you learn to discipline yourself and be a caring father to yourself?

Stranger

my hurt and my anger
keep me feeling
for this stranger
i don't know what it is
but words just can't
seem to explain her
she's the one that i love
the one i always dreamed of
the one that's always been there
even when the times are rough
i love her so much
and i won't never let go
of the feelings we share
i just want them to grow
and grow till i explode
with nothing but love
for this stranger i know

-Rich

From The Beat: If she's always been there, how is she a stranger? Or do you just mean a stranger to us 'cause you choose to keep her anonymous? We recommend if you want the love to grow, that you do some growing, too. You're getting too old for the street game; you're no longer a young foo' — change! Or your love won't grow but die behind locked doors.

Life

While I'm in Juvenile Hall, my life has been passing me by. What I mean by that is that I'm losing part of my last teenage years, because I'm about to turn into an adult and that's just a waste of my life me being in here.

The other thing that I'm about to miss is going to my brother's high school graduation. That was one of the things that I wanted to go to.

-Lil' Carlos

From The Beat: So, you already know what you're missing out on and now that you know, what do you plan to do about it? You already know how much stuff you miss out on so try something new . . . try staying free.

My Game

my game is my life
and i refuse to lose
i will win
'cause my game is not over
but my life has not really started
and as i go through
the rest of my life successfully
and i go on in my game
and play it
as i go along
as i blow air
i love my life as it is
and as i keep striving
to be successful in my game

-Lil' Hook

From the Beat: If you plan to keep your life as it is, look at it right here and right now — 'cause lockdown's in your future, too. It's like jumping off a cliff and saying, "I refuse to fall!" But if you're not ready to listen yet, it's your call.

Ran From Camp

Today I am sitting in the Hall because I chose to run from Camp for the second time.

I just went to court today and they told me that my PO said he wants me to go to CYA! He said all I do

is gangbang and get in trouble. So he said he wants me to go somewhere so I can be taught a lesson.

I am not sure what lesson he wants me to learn by going to CYA! All that will do is make me worse — but shhh, all I can do is sit and put the whole thing in God's hands. Until next time . . .

-Lil' Leo

From The Beat: Make up your mind that no matter what happens to you next, you will not go from bad to worse. You can't even afford to stay the same — time for change, Leo.

It's A Hustler

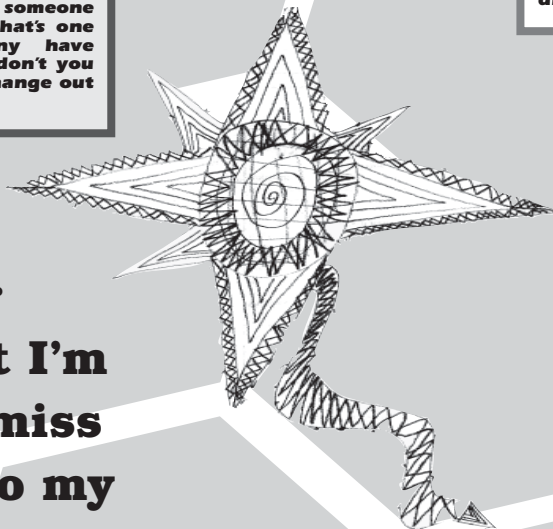
Every day it's a gamble. But I'm not on the streets; I'm in Juvenile Hall in max. It's like I'm awaiting trial for these cases. They got these possibilities: Life with a chance of parole, 9 years, 3-5 years, they just don't know how it's feeling, they just don't know.

They sayin' I could go to Camp again, or go to Rites Of Passage, they just don't know. The DA don't want me back on the streets. Do I cry? Nah, I know I'll be back in a minute. The judge already sayin' they ain't got enough evidence. So they tryin' to make me sit. It's like this whole business is a gamble. This isn't jail no more; they moved this to a business. They using us to get paid; it's a hustle.

Me being 'hood, I'm not going to be worried, never being scared, hoping for the best, but thinking for the worst, so I don't trip, I hustle. Forget bargaining, I'm a hustler, I'm from the streets and that's a hustle. I'm major in the streets. I mix my emotions with my anger and just think about what I been through. It's a hustle. Lil' Rocky will be out by November or December.

-Lil' Rocky

From The Beat: You really can't have it both ways. That is to say that you can't be a hustler and constantly be hustled all the time. Dig your situation, you say that they done turned this into a business, and many people agree, but now they got you up in the quota and profit margin of they business and you ain't hustling nobody or for nuthin'; in their world, you hustle for what they allow you to have. Basically, hustling a pacifier. Get off the Donald Goines hype, there are some real game shooters from the gutters up in here, too, game recognize game homie. Pick yo' self up and be about something more meaningful in life, a real hustler knows that those who are selfless get the best returns in life.





Man I'm Goin' Through It, But I've Been Through It

Man I' going through it, but I've been through it already. Every day is a struggle too 'cause you don't never know if a ninja might get tired of watchin' you get all the glamour and gold, feel me?

They see you out there doing yo' thang, riding scrapers, and all the Mitchell and Ness, and Hardwood Classics and they get mad. Why hate? Is it a reason ninjas that know they can't succeed in life, they just hate fo' some reason. To me, it's like life or death and it's nothin' you could do about it. While the DA tryin' to give you life with a possibility of parole, feel me? It's cold on cithas. What is it to lose nothin'? Why worry? Man, I don't worry 'cause I know I touch down in a minute, it's nothin', so I don't worry.

From grindin', robbin', shootin', runnin', stuntin' and doin' my thang. Man, I done seen almost everythang but Christ, and that's why I say I'm goin' through it, but I've been through it.

-Lil' Rocky

From The Beat: There are other ways to survive in this world, don't you think? Do you have to hustle and grind and rob people? Isn't that the easy way out? Trip this, you suffer the biggest loss in the end 'cause you're paying the highest price — time. Time is precious and you'll never get back any second of the time you do. Now, you could do your time and use it productively to educate yourself, or you can do your time and think up more quick money making schemes and wind up in jail for life asking yourself, "Why didn't I listen?"

Two Views on Love:

1) unspoken love
what is love unspoken
what is love unshared
what is this love
this love is an empty place
deeper than the depths of black holes
love unshared is eternal pain
which i can't sustain
so why do I withhold this love
a beautiful feeling that would free me
i hold it — scared
scared to lose another
2) love spoken
what is love spoken
what is love shared
what is this love
this love is heartfelt warmth
more bountiful than mind can conceive
love that is shared is eternal happiness
which i wish to contain
so why not share this love
to free me of this burden

-Sho-Moe

From The Beat: To open one's heart is to make oneself vulnerable, and you remember the pain of unrequited love. Yet unspoken love is no better, for how will unspoken love ever be requited? In light of the twin poems above — share your love!

Bye

i'm gone
time is going by hell a slow
it's driving me crazy
six months
it doesn't seem right
but it's done
so i'm gonna go forward
i want to let everyone know
it's a fact you won't see me
here no more
i leave monday
i was jus' told i had to
stay here three extra days
but it's nothin'
i'm gonna make it
well i'm out
much love

-Traviesa

From The Beat: When you're expecting to go, to walk out those doors, and they tell you to wait; then they give you another date, and delay that, too — it gets to you! By the time you read this, you'll be in your group home, about ready to mail us a fat, handful of poems! Stay strong and stay chill. We'd say be good, but we know you will! No matter what happens, keep your feet — and remember all the wisdom you shared in The Beat!

What Is It

Hustling isn't just selling dope and makin' money, it's the way you is. Authority is being able to do what you want, but pain is what makes you kill this person, rob that person, especially when you mix pain with anger and it combines, it isn't good or bad, stuff happens.

Some people get hurt, some people cry. I haven't cried in years. That's what happens when your heart turns cold.

Suffering is what happens to people where I'm from. It's like life or death, pain or misery, life is hectic. From gettin' shot at and living the life; it was sweet for a minute while I was having all that fun — poppin' E's, drinking Robo, smokin' weed; life's a gamble and a hustle.

Money, power and respect, that's what it is, seeing potnas drop like flies dying in my eye, never could be a nerd, didn't grow up that way, freedom is what it is.

-Lil' Rocky

From The Beat: It's cool that you've written so much for this Beat, Rocky, you definitely have a lot to say. At the same time, it feels like your writing is all over the place, but it doesn't really tell us that much about who you are. What do you mean when you say hustling is "the way you are"? When you talk about authority, are you saying you have it, 'cause in this case, you've put yourself in a situation where the authorities have all the control. You also say that mixing pain and anger makes people kill and rob. Is that what makes you do your hustle? Is the fact that you're suffering from you want to make others suffer, too? Next week, we'd really like to hear more about who you are, and what makes you do what you do.

I'm Out Anyway!

fuhgit these ninjas
they' hell a fake
always talkin' about
what they' gon' do
but ain't gon' bust a grape
these staff see what be goin' on
but they messy too
but lucky i ain't got to deal with
'cause i'm gettin' out on the thirtieth
and i'm goin' home
so do what you do
'cause it ain't gon' affect
but think before you act
it's deep when you playin'
with the next sister's life
yeah i'm nice
so i'm just gon' go back
to bein' me
so i can get out
this good friday

-Taneisha

From The Beat: Those who run their mouths, trying to mess with the next one coming in or going out, really ought to keep it to themselves. But it's not about who's fake and who's real, 'cause either way, what they say is plain messed up, ya feel? We're glad you're doing your program well, and that when you get out, you'll do right — and chill!

My Life (Part Two)

this jail can't hold me
because i already broke the rules
i used something in my head
i call it a tool
they think they can stop me
but i already got my posse
man y'all staff
tryin' a rob me
y'all can't stop me
all y'all can do is block me
maybe lock me up
all i can say is
that's what's up

-Rasheed

From The Beat: The focus should be on you and what you need to do, but it's easy to make it all about the staff stopping you. Forget about the staff for a minute, and think: "It's up to me if I rise or I sink." Why keep repeating the same mistakes again and again? Don't go back to where you've already been. Change while you can.

Man, I done seen almost everythang but Christ

I'm sorry for all the bad things I did, but I did not realize it until I got locked up.

The Custom Collage, Vol. 1

when i look out my window
i wish that i could have my favorite dish
which is fish
this is jail life
anything else is civilized
first we hit 'em high
then they hit us low
like nat king cole
this jail time
is unforgettable
snitches is like nyquil
and bring down the fever
but i can't take it
got to live like leave it to beaver

-Torre

From The Beat: Everybody blames the snitch, but really it's just time for you to quit. You don't need this pain, and that's why it's time to get out the game.

Lord Forgive Me

as i sit in these jail cells
i look at the walls and start raising hell
praying and asking the man in the heavens above
to forgive me for turning into a thug
my life is hard
it has never been easy lord
so please forgive me
as i get quizzzy
and sometimes i even feel wizzzy
but i drop to my kneezies
and still i ask the lord to please forgive me

-La La

From The Beat: If you knew you were already forgiven, would that help convince you to change the way that you're living? Would you show a change of attitude to express your gratitude, if you knew the Lord already forgave you?

Ready To Hit The Pinta

This is ya boy Emmy,
Over here holdin' it down in max
What's up to all my playa patnaz
So to all you j-cats, you better rise to the occasion.
But I'm gettin' ready to hit the pinta,
They tryna wash me,
For being me, ain't that a . . !
Rip Greedy, J-J, K-D, Tank
Y'all are missed
We love y'all
Look over us
We will see y'all at the crossroad

-Emmy

From The Beat: We already explained why we had to take some things out. When you get out, we hope that you can be the first one in your family to live a free life. Being who you are is always a choice. It would take a very strong, intelligent and courageous person to do this. If you are thinking about living differently, let us know how we can help you do that. Use your time wisely in the pen.



That's What's Up

In jail you feel dead — gone, but it's not over, this is mandatory. Trust me, I have been here up to 9 months sittin' in one unit — they can't hold you forever. It's some people in prison for life, 15 with L's, 25 to Life, stuff like that.

People crying over doing one hour in their room, but people in Folsom doing 2 years lockdown in their cells — that's what's up. The streets are watching hard, watching you mess up, gettin' jacked by the police all the time, gettin' shot and shot at, it's real to us to be married to the game. Growing up in a struggle don't necessarily mean you have to be harder than this person, or you have to have more money or more girls 'cause somebody could still kill you.

Everybody bleeds the same way, but when all you know is selling dope, robbin', and stealing — it's hard to change when all you know is the streets. You can't be soft, you have heart, but you can't get greedy. You have to be able to get what you need. To get what you need to have is sometimes hard when that money gets in your hand, you want more than you want, and that's wussup.

-Lil' Rocky

From The Beat: It's true that we all die, but we all live first. And it's in how we choose to live that determines what we get out of life. You can't just say, "the streets is all I know" 'cause there's other things out there that you can learn. That's like a child saying, "I can't tie my shoes so I'll just wear Velcro strapped shoes." You have to learn new things or you'll never get anywhere in life and trust us, you don't want to remain stagnant.

My Dream

My dream is to get out of the Hall, go home and get a job, have some kids, get a family and buy a house.

-Lil' Aaron

From The Beat: Just a few words for you . . . your dreams can be reality, but it will take hard work. What will be the biggest challenge about achieving your goals?

**I told them, "Let's have a barbecue!"
So we went down to the Mexican store and bought some steaks.**

Spring Break

My spring break was hella coo'! I got home and went to my friend's house, and we started drinkin' and chillin'. We went to the park and threw a barbecue. We had hella people over, just playing ball and eating barbecue.

The only thing that sucked about my spring break, is me and my girl broke up. She says she didn't want me at Camp, and that it's better off me and her separating.

I wasn't trippin' though, because the next day I found out her best friend liked me. So I took her out, and her lil' bro', to the movies and to eat. So now I'm a get with my ex-girlfriend's best friend. She's a hella fine Mexican, funny, and understandable; and she likes to have fun!

I really enjoyed my spring break. I didn't even want to come back to Camp on Sunday.

-Peanut

From The Beat: We're glad a friend was there to talk to you, 'cause we know it always hurts when your girlfriend says it's through. Sometimes an understanding talk leads to something more than just being friends, and it sounds like that's what happened this time in the end. Your week sounds like a month's worth of fun and drama. Your girlfriend's best friend? That's not scandalous to you? Could this cause more problems? Hope not. We're glad you came back to Camp though, 'cause you don't need a warrant!

Saturday Night

It was Saturday night when I heard the great news! I had popped two pills and I was high as hell.

I was with my girlfriend of two years and eleven months; and she said she had some great news. And she did!

She told me that she was two weeks pregnant, and I told her that I loved her. And then my mom and I got into it the next day, when I told her! Until next time — see ya!

-Pastor J-Wizzle

From The Beat: But how great is it for the child-to-be when its would-be dad gets the news high off pills on a home visit from Camp Sweeney? It might be great if it moved you to make serious changes in your life and stick to it. No disrespect, just serious talk: Do you really think your ready? Or can get ready?

Easter Vacation

My Easter vacation was good. And this is how my story goes: The first day I left, it was Friday.

Right when I got home, I drank. And then after that, I just hit up a couple of my homeboys. So they came through. And we were just talking for an hour or so, and just listening to some CD's. So, after I finished my beer, I told them, "Let's have a barbecue!"

So we went down to the Mexican store and bought some steaks. And after we went there, I just needed some more drank. So we got a couple of forties and a bottle of Hurricane, and we went back to my house to barbecue.

So I decided that I wanted to call some girls over. So I called some over, and that's when the barbecue really started!

-Chubbs

From The Beat: You know we worry about you needing to drink so much. It sounds like the barbecue was fine, but there must be times and places where drink makes it hard for you to think. And it sounds like you're driven to drink. Do you feel you even have a choice? Obsession + compulsion = addiction.

**I was thinking
in my head,
"That was
my second
brother that I
just lost!"**

Going To Do Good

When I get out, I'm not going to come back. The way I'm going to keep myself out of jail is — I'm not going to go looking for trouble!

But if trouble comes to me, I'm going to handle it. When I get out, I'm going to finish school; because the last grade I finished was the eighth grade.

After I finish school, I'm going to learn how to be a mechanic — so I'll have something to do with my time instead of getting in trouble and arrested. So when I get out, I'm going to do good.

-Gino

From The Beat: Maybe those grants from Bill Gates to Oakland's high schools to create smaller schools, including schools to teach trades, will turn into an auto shop class at your high school. Hope so, but either way — your plan is a good one!

Rest In Peace

My name is Mike, but the homies call me Smokey. I've been locked up for about two-and-a-half years straight, in and out of halls and group homes. The last group home I was in was Lifeworks.

All I was doing was gangbanging and fighting my enemy, putting it down for my 'hood. Well, you know me, I said, "Forget this program!" Then when I got back to the 'hood, I was looking for my brother — but he was nowhere to be found!

So I went to my Old G's house. They call him Bambam. He was from the same gang as my brother. I asked him if he seen my brother. At first, he wouldn't tell me — but he finally told me he had died!

I was thinking in my head, "That was my second brother that I just lost!" I couldn't think of anything but going out and riding for my set. I'll add more next Tuesday 'cause we're out of time tonight. It ended early.

-Smokey

From The Beat: That is some terrible news you got from Bambam! But as long as all you can think to do is ride for your set — you're still your own worst enemy. It's that kind of thinking that took your brother's life. We know you must be crazy with grief, but why not get crazy enough to leave the gang life that condemned him to death? Pray to his spirit in heaven and then listen. His love has not changed, just his vision.



The New Generation

If I had a chance to tell the new generation of cholitos, I would tell them to keep trucha and think before you do stuff, like my little cousins and family friends, because this ain't no place you would want to be in, jail.

But I am what I am, and I ain't going to change my gangster ways. To the homies keep trucha.

-Osito

From The Beat: Osito, you got some really good advice for the youngsters. Why do you choose to not take your own advice? Is their life more valuable than yours? Do you think you are in too deep? If so, what does that mean? How did your life get this way?

If You Could Go Anywhere

If I could go anywhere right now I would go home, give a hug to my family, and I'll take my sister's car.

I'll go cut my hair and then go home, take a shower, eat my best food and call my lady to see if she wants to go to the movies. I'll take her to a nice restaurant and give her a nice Easter present and then go post with my cousins and smoke and drink.

-Guero

From The Beat: Sometimes there are things that we never really cherish 'till they are taken away from us. Tell us more. How would you have your hair cut? What kind of food do you wanna eat? What movie do you wanna see? Take us with you.



Believe It

What's up Beat? Nobody wants to go to CYA, especially not me. But if I keep on running from my problems — that's the only place I'm going to be in the end. The program that I have to finish is Camp and it's easy, I just have to put my head to it and just do it.

So this time I'm going to be patient and do my program 'cause sooner or later the system is going to get its time out of me, believe it.

-Dante

From The Beat: Good attitude. What will you be doing so that you get on the right path? What do you need to give or give up to achieve success?

It's Funny But It's Not Funny

I have been through a lot of serious things in my life, but I am very thankful that I am here now today. I feel that God has been by my side every time I step out my front door and into the streets, as I call the game.

When you're out in the streets, you live life as a game, sort of like chess.

You have to make the right moves 'cause the game is testing.

Nowadays it be the young kids that's putting ninjas to rest, so when you're in that game, you have to watch your back, be very aware of your surroundings. And sometimes you have to watch what you say, 'cause at any given time you can be put down in the dirt.

I have seen a lot of my friends get killed and a lot of my family members get killed. And I grew up in the streets, so I know how to conduct myself on the streets, that's why I'm still here now, today, and I thank God.

-Ron Ron

From The Beat: It's only funny in a ridiculous way. Why do you think the game is like this? If the streets are like a game of chess, is there a winner? Who is the winner? Or are there only losers? Do you think God will always protect you?

CYA And Santa Rita

A lot of my peoples are being sent to these places and I don't approve.

-Anthony

From The Beat: What would you approve of? What do you think the system should do with them? What do you think your peoples should do?

What Up Beat?

What up, Beat? This be Lil' Monster. Just lettin' you know how messed up this system is. Trying to give me three years in CYA and this is my first case. But its coo', I ain't trippin' — it's nothin'. The only reason I ain't trippin' is because I talked to my PO and he said I'll be out in a couple of weeks.

I can't wait to I go back to my city so I could see the homies and mi familia. But anyways, keep yo' head up and be safe..

-Lil' Monster

From The Beat: Is the time the most messed up thing about the system? What lessons have you learned from your encounter with it? If you could change a few things about the system, what would they be? And, what other plans do you have besides kicking it with your homeboys, and will they be things that could bring you back to the Hall?

Incarcerated

while i'm incarcerated
a lot of things roll through my mind
i think of things i used to do
and things i used to see
i sometimes close my eyes
and imagine myself at home
watching tv
or in my varrio
kicking it with my homies
getting high
i imagine myself
laying in bed with my hyna
or being with my family
but most of all i imagine
what it will feel like to be set free

-Jokes

From The Beat: Holy smokes! Not many jokes in your poem about missing friends, family, and a girl at home. If the jokes are on the street, you need to stop fooling around. To stay off lockdown, change your playmates, playthings and playgrounds!

**I have seen
a lot of my
friends get
killed and
a lot of
my family
members
get killed.**

To The Homeboys

What's cracking? It's the homeboy Juanito from Hayward. I've been here for two months. I'm supposed to be getting out this week. Just wanna show love to all the homeboys from the Hall.

I'm happy, but my lady is three-months pregnant, about to have my baby soon. Getting out of here stressed. I'm going to be a fourteen-year-old dad. I'm out.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: Now that you are going to be a dad you are going to have to get your mind straight. What do you want to provide for your seed? How do you plan on raising your child? What are the attributes of a good father? What lessons do you want to instill in your child? Who are you going to make a priority — your child or your homies?

How I Got Caught Up

I was on home supervision and the homies came over late night. They told me there was some funk, so I said, "Let's go." We mobbed out 8 deep in a van. We hopped out on some fools, but it wasn't the ones we were lookin' for.

Like five minutes later we got pulled over by the "placa" (police) and they took us out the car and searched the van. They caught my lil' homie with a strap. That's when they took us all in. We came in six deep in the Hall and two went to Rita. Now I'm just kickin' back with the homies waiting to see what pops off.

Hopefully they give me one more chance, but if not, I'm going to Camp with the homeboys.

-Young Gato

From The Beat: You see to be very nonchalant about the situation. Did you learn any lessons from this situation? Does this make you think about making a change in your life? Where is the life you're living gonna take you? Sounds like that lifestyle is taking you nowhere but . . . down. Do you notice a pattern here: "8 deep in the van" and then "6 deep in the Hall," besides the two that went to Rita?

**I'm going to be
a fourteen-year
old dad.**

A Step Away

My heart is at a constant battle with my mind,
I can see, but at the same time, I am still blind,

My soul is out of control,

Never knowing which way to go,

I'm a step away from losing my sanity,

All I want to do is be with my family,

My life is through,

So what should I do?

I'm asking you 'cause . . .

I don't know, I have nothing better to do,

I made another mistake,

And now I'm a step away,

From never seeing the light of day.

-Joker

From The Beat: Joker, nice poem. You really stepped up with this piece. But the question is . . . what should you do? We can't tell you what to do; you're a man who has to choose his own fate. What do you want out of life? What is most important to you? Family? If so, what do you need to do to act this way?

Released To Camp

Ay what's up? It's me from those Hayward streets. Well, I went to court yesterday and they gave me another chance, so this is my last chance.

So it's time to get my shhh together and look towards the future.

-Lil' Rickie

From The Beat: What will you do with your last chance? How do you plan on making the best out of it? What do you think the future holds for you?



Every Time

Every time I come in here I think about what I could be doing, and what I can be getting. But this time I be thinking a little more about everything and everybody, and more about my family.

I missed out on the prom, and had an opportunity to make some money, like going to work.

-J B2

From The Beat: It's good that you are thinking more this time. Will that make the difference for you when you get out his time?

What Should I Do?

I'm left alone without nobody.

But that's not true,

It was something that came out my mind.

What should I do with my life?

Tell me, please.

I don't know.

I should get my life straight for once.

-Veronica GU

From The Beat: It sounds like you've already answered your question, Veronica. You "should get your life straight for once." What will it take for you to make this happen?

Going To Group Homes

I am going to a group home and I would like to say to all the lil' ninjas and lil' mommas, do be cool, and to the people that it's their first time, make it they first and last.

My lil' bro', James, I love that lil' ninja and want him to know that, and to do the right thing and keep moving on that negative shhh ninja. Do what you gotta do and I might be going where you going, to a group home.

Love you lil' bro'.

-Jasmine GU

From The Beat: Nice advice, Jasmine. Will you take it yourself?

My Life

My life is cruel

My life is crazy

My life can be better if I try

And I will change my life

Not for my mommy, but for me.

My life is going to get better.

-Rebekah GU

From The Beat: How would you like your life to be, Rebekah, and what will it take for you to make it happen?

Dear You

Sorry that you have lost your father, but it was for a good reason. God was ready for him. The lifestyle that your father chose to make money cost him his life, and he knew that, that could of happen.

He is watching over you and your father's working habit, it was the only one he knew was good.

By the way, keep him in your memory.

-Fuller GU

From The Beat: Nice letter. Would you send the same letter to the police officer's daughter and to the "gangster's" daughter?

Make A Game Plan

Look at the good and bad shhh in your life, and separate and list what you want to do and go. Do it and don't let no one mess with or distract you from your goals. Look into the future and see the wonderful things that it behold.

-Good Thinker GU

From The Beat: Excellent thinking. So when you do this, what do you see as your goals?

Another One Gone

Man, just a few weeks ago, someone killed my big bra, Ming Lee. It was a shock 'cause I would never think that big bra would be one of the dead homies one day.

Bra was a cool for real on the one-one. He did his dirt when he had to, but didn't talk about nothing, you feel me? Three days before big bra got killed, he came up here to visit me 'cause moms told him about the trouble I was getting myself into.

Every time I think about Lee, all I could hear is this voice telling me, "Go ahead and knock the program out for me, lil' bra," and then after I tell him I love him, he be like, "I love you more, lil' bra."

That shhh just got me mad to where I want to just take flight on somebody, but I gotta think before I react to things. Then after that the big homie got killed.

That hit me just as hard as big bra getting killed, but I just want to know how da Rula doin' 'cause we in here cool, but everything happens for a reason and it was just they time to be with the Lord, and we gon' see him one day, but until then, rest in peace Bra Bra Lee, and Joe Cheez, from your little bra, I love y'all.

-Young Cd B2

From The Beat: When anyone close to us passes, it is always a difficult to deal with. However, these are the consequences when you are close to people involved in the game. You have to know that if you do dirt, you have to expect to get dirty yourself. You say he was telling you to be on your program, but was he on his? What kind of message does that send? Are you going to fulfill his dying wish and do a good program?

Fallen Soldiers

I miss my soldiers so much. They did so much in this world. I wish they can come back to life and be what they want to be. See y'all when I get there.

RIP:

A Wax

Boo

Jo

Money Mike

Face

KG

Winter

Dre

Diddie

Javio

Dick Head

Big Homie

Shoddy

CED

D Rock

Moe

Curt

Road

Nellawood

Dee Lou

Gone but not forgotten

-Unknown

From The Beat: What do you miss most about your homies? What did your homies accomplish in this world? What did they want to be?

**Three days
before big bra
got killed, he
came up here
to visit me
'cause moms
told him about
the trouble I
was getting
myself into.**

It Hurts

I feel sorry that you lost your fathers. I'm happy I have my dad. He was very abusive and he tried to rape me, so I feel it was better for him not to have been in my life.

My mother was not around while he abused me and tried to rape me. I don't know, but it hurts, so I know that it hurts even more for your father to be dead, but maybe god took him for a reason.

-Alexzandra GU

From The Beat: Man, Alexzandra, what a sad story. Where is your father now? How about your mother? Why do you think having no father is better than having one who abuses you? You have a big heart to feel for these children who, like you, have experienced a lot of pain. What helps you get through it?

**The situation you
put me through is
rockin' my brain.**

Just A Little Flow

Yo', I'm going though it.

Dealing with these lies and these ninja's alibis.

Saying that he loves me, but it's only a disguise.

Baby, all I feel is pain,

All I see is rain,

I'm going insane 'cause I'm just trying to maintain, The situation you put me through is rockin' my brain.

Yo', I can't take it no more, I need to go

But how can I leave you now?

Please, baby, show me how.

Thinking about this shhh makes my mind go wild.

I'm confused boo,

You got me crying . . .

Never smiling . . .

Always frowning . . .

When I'm tryin' to be yo' Superwoman,

And you're one in a million,

But you don't appreciate a damn thang,

Always having your stuff hang,

Disrespectin', hollarin' da b-word.

Always want me to catch yo' stick,

But boy, you always flash quick.

Blamin' me for dumb stuff,

Thinkin' that you all tough.

Boy, you need to shut up.

We fight and argue every day about some little petty shhh; now what we got is bullshhh.

-Jazze GU

From The Beat: So, now that you see all this man's crap and are feeling all the bad feelings you get from being with him, how can you ask yourself: "How can I leave you now?" We obviously don't know the whole situation, but how can't you leave a person who treats you so badly? Yes, breaking up is always painful, but it's a pain that ends, unlike staying with someone who treats you like crap, that can go on and on. Being locked up takes you away from this person physically, so now you just have to pull your mind away, too. You don't need anyone dragging you down, Jazze.



Tony Montana Style

Nobody want to do it Montana style, cop bricks an' keys, and go all out, cruising with big Benzes, Lexes going all out, the grimy knocking on the door. So what ya going to do now? The only thing that comes to mind is say hello to my lil' friend, and watch the crowd move now.

It's a mark of a new year, and everybody's homies is kissin' the dirt now. Nobody want to ball out, but everybody want to kill now. It ain't the City by the Bay no mo', it's chopper city now, choppers raining on the streets. Instead of using umbrellas, everybody got a gun and a vest now.

What goes around comes around quicker than you think. RIP to everybody homies to JoNo Mike, to Ming Lee, to D-Rock, to Joe Cheese, and the police officer that got ate up on the streets, RIP.

Who's next? I know it ain't me. I'm locked up. But who's next to get ate up by these grimy San Francisco streets? Ya know what I mean.

-Jd B5

From The Beat: You paint a very dark, very bleak picture of the reality in which you live. There is no doubt that there are far too many guns in use in this city, but do you have any suggestions for curbing this epidemic of violence? How do you think things came to be as they are? What do you think might make a difference in changing this picture? Education? Jobs? Training? Mental health professionals? What?

Loving Money, The Root Of All Evil

Money! Everybody wants money. Money gets people caught up. Look at the war. When everything is said and done, it was behind money.

Money gets people killed. Money breaks up families. Money does a lot, so be careful 'cause money will do you wrong or good.

-Lil' Carl B1

From The Beat: How can someone avoid falling victim to money? With the way things are set up, it's impossible to survive without money. How will you make sure that you don't fall victim to the things you mentioned? How do you mean that money is behind the war?

What's Next

What's next, that's what I want to know. Are they gon 707 me or not?

They give me these long court days that got me ready to think what's next. I'm hoping I do go to the Y or 850, but damn, I can't say send me here. So I got to wait to see what the heck they gon do with my life. But it's gangsta so I just go ride it out.

I will be home next year some time. It's not like I killed nobody, so they got to let me go. What's next?

-Lil' Dakota B4

From The Beat: We don't understand why you would want to go to the Y or to 850. While you're waiting to see what they're going to do with your life, what are you doing to prepare yourself for what you're going to do with your life? It's great that you're going home next year some time, but going home is easy. Staying home is hard. What do you plan to change in your life to make sure you're not locked up again, writing 'bout what's next?

Give 'Em The Business

Ever since November 2, 2003 when I got in YGC, people been testing me. I'm surprised I ain't blow up yet. But whenever I hear I'm leaving soon, I'm going to show somebody the business.

-No Name B4

From The Beat: If you follow through on this not-so-subtle threat, you won't be leaving any time soon.

One Life To Live

What's goin' on with my ninjas up in the hall? Just doing time. I can feel that I'm doing the same thing. I can't wait to hit the block to see my ninja, and get out this green and go touch some real green. Go see my fam one more time, and hope I stay my butt out of a jail.

To tell the truth, stop comin' to jail is hard, harder than you think it is. I guess it is the life I live, but I got one life to live so I gon live it the only way I know how to live, and that's keep it gangsta.

-Lil' Dakota B4

From The Beat: You know, LD, hoping to stay your butt out of jail is just not enough, especially when you're committed to going back to the block, getting your green, and keeping it gangster. We can't tell you how to live your life, but we can tell you that it sounds like an empty hope, a child's wish to see Santa Claus, that has you thinking you can go back to doing the same things you've always done without suffering the same consequences. Actually, since you're getting older, the consequences won't be quite the same. To get a better idea of what you're facing if you continue to "keep it gangsta," read The Beat Without.

A Little Of This, A Little Of That

Wass up wit' it, Beat? Well I'm here on another interesting Tuesday night. All I have to say is the judicial system stinks. It smells like there's bull crap running through the justice side.

The streets of San Francisco are crazy. Where's the Guardian Angels?

What is The Beat's view on all of this violence?

To the founders of The Beat, I think The Beat is a great program. It helps me get a lot off my chest. Sometimes I feel that stuff slides though that is inappropriate.

I called my peeps, and they told me my ninja got hit. I'm like, "Damn! Not that lil' homie." I felt bad. So what I would say to those lil' girls would be compassionate and sincere.

-Peter George B5

From The Beat: You've covered several different topics in this piece, PG, so we're not sure what to respond to. You already know what The Beat thinks of the ongoing violence in this city and others — we think it's a tragedy that makes the white people in charge very happy, as long as Black people continue to kill Black people, and Latinos continue to kill Latinos. We agree that sometimes inappropriate pieces make it into the pages of The Beat, but when you're publishing a weekly magazine of this quality and this length, some mistakes are bound to happen. Finally, we if you're referring to the daughters of the slain police officer and the slain gang banger from Richmond, we wish you would tell us what compassionate and sincere words you would use for both.

You Ain't The Daddy

I'm getting sick and tired of these ninjas talking 'bout they got babies. They know damn well they ain't pops of that baby. When that stunna start tryna get child support, you gon be quick to say you ain't the daddy.

So to all you ninjas out there that know you ain't the poppy, quit hollerin' and stay down!

-Tay-Dumpa B4

From The Beat: Just because a boy (man?) says he's not the father — especially when child support is on the table — doesn't mean he's not the father. We wish you were right about most of these babies' daddies, but experience tells us that there are far too many young boys fathering far too many children with far too many young girls. Instead of hating on the ones who say they have kids, we wish you would spread the word about the value of using condoms!

It ain't the City by the Bay no mo', it's chopper city now, choppers raining on the streets.

Drooling To Be Free

Man, I hate comin' up in here on the real. This time I came up in here is for a warrant 'cause I got caught jay walkin' in Alameda.

Moms and grandma be comin' up in here on Saturday wit' that two item BS, talking about all the good food she been cooking, especially on Easter. I be drooling all over shhh, feel me. Then I go to my room. You knowin' how that go, yeah.

Then at night all I dream about is what could I have done different. If I could have rode my bike on the same side of the street to the BART and got on instead of them sunburned necks messin' with me. Anyways I'm gone get back at y'all. Gots to cut.

-Lyons B1

From The Beat: We're curious about you saying you hate comin' in here, but then talking about "this time." How many times does it take before you change whatever it is that's leading you here? If you keep coming back, maybe you don't hate it as much as you think. As for the good food you're missing out on, that's another reason to stop coming to The Halls.

To tell the truth, stop comin' to jail is hard, harder than you think it is.

The First Time

My good experience was having sex for the first time. It felt so good. I never knew there was anything that felt the way it did. But after we had sex, I couldn't get her off of me, kind of like a fatal attraction. We broke up because I had sex with another girl. Now we're back together, and sex never felt so good.

-Sir Pimpalicious YTEC

From The Beat: Is it all about the sex with her though? What else do you two share that you both enjoy? You need to be careful with whom you have sex, and what they think the deal is to avoid those fatal attraction-type situations.



A Young One's Day

As he wakes up from a bad dream in a cold sweat he climbs clumsily out of his bed and staggers towards his bathroom. Once he gets into his bathroom, he flips the switch to the light. He covers his eyes as a reaction to the brightness of the light.

After getting over the brightness of the light he turns the shower on. As he slips in hot high pressure shower, he washes the sleep out of his eyes. As he's enjoying his shower, his metro rings. He screams, "Damn!" as he turns off the shower and runs towards his cell phone.

"Hello," he says as he answers his phone.

"What's up, bra?" That's his boy on the other side of the phone. "Come to the block."

"Alright. I'm on my way," he says. He puts on the white tee, blue jeans, and Nikes and hits the block. He greets his homies wit' love. He sell his drugs, and totes his pistol.

That's a young gunna's day.

-Tay-Dumpa B4

From The Beat: It seems to us that this young gunna might have written an entirely different piece with the same title. It would go something like this: "A guard wakes you up hella early and tells you to shower and take a sit. You put on someone else's drawes. Then you lock up and clean your cell spotless, with your blankets folded military style. Then you go to breakfast with plastic bowls of cereal. Then they order you back to your cell, but make sure you don't mess up your room. Then you go to this weak-ass class, then back to your cell (again, and again, and again). Then..." Well, we can stop here 'cause things are the same, day after day — someone telling you when to eat, sleep, go to the toilet, talk, stop talking, etc. etc. And "that's a young gunna's day."

Learn

I think that culture is very important to learn about. It is very important to learn about your culture to know what has your family been through, to know your history and your ancestors. It is also good to know the things that your country has done.

-Ael YTEC

From The Beat: Where are you from? What do you know about your culture that you feel someone else should know about?

RIP To My Homie

Man, two weeks ago my mom came up here and told me that my big bra Lee got killed. When she told me that I was mad, but it did not hit me until like Monday when I was thinking about him, and when I went to my room, I went off because I was feeling it, so they put me on Q5 for like two weeks. But every time I think about my ninja I got mad as hell and wanted to go off on ninjas.

Then I got a phone call. Then she told me that my ninja Joe Cheez got killed. It made me really mad and I wanted to go off on some ninjas, but I think about what I am in here for so I do not do what I want to do because I want to go home.

-J-Stub B2

From The Beat: It must be so hard to lose people you're close to, especially when you can't even be there for their families. But do their deaths make you wonder at all about why you're in this game? Do you really want to go out like they did? How do you think the friends and family of the folks you have beef with feel when they lose someone close to them? We know it's hard to imagine letting the game and the beef go, but what do you think your life would be like without it?

My family would accept whomever I choose to date, but I am sure they would prefer a black male.



It's All On You

Culture for me is a personal and individual choice of who you want to be in a relationship with. My family would accept whomever I choose to date, but I am sure they would prefer a black male.

I am black, and I am sure that they would want a person who has similar background and hardships, but they would not knock me if I decided to marry a white man. They might say I have jungle fever, but nothing more.

-Keneisha YTEC

From The Beat: Sounds like your family is pretty open-minded. What about you, do you usually go out with men of the same race and background or have you checked out other folks, too?

Culture

Well, I guess culture is not important, but if you love someone from a different culture, I guess the culture shouldn't matter. I mean my mom don't trip, but my dad, he trippin'. But I don't let that get to me, 'cause it's me, not them.

-My Life YTEC

From The Beat: What does your pops trip on? Have you ever let your pops know that him trippin' won't change your mind?

My Culture

My culture is Vietnamese. My parents are Vietnamese, and my family is from Phu Quy. Phu Quy is my island next to Vietnam.

When I was in Saigon, we had to take a fishing boat to get there, and it took one whole day. I wish I could go back there, so I can see all of my family from my mom's side and my dad's side. It was hella crackin' over there.

Me and my older brothers got into a fight with some other suckas. Then later we found out it was our cousin, so my dad kicked our asses. Phu Quy is where I'm from, and Vietnamese is what I speak.

To y'all that is locked up, keep your head up, and do your time, don't let the time do you.

-Phu Quy YTEC

From The Beat: That was some coincidence. Were you and you cousins cool after that happened? When do you think you will be able to go back there? What made it so "crackin'?"

Watch Who You Help

A bad experience I had would be when I got stabbed in my right arm, and in my back two times. It hurt really bad. I went to the hospital and got stitches.

It was because I helped a homie out and he didn't help me, so this happened. So don't ever trust anyone. That taught me a lesson.

-Stuck YTEC

From The Beat: A better lesson probably would be not associating with people who'll have you beefing unnecessarily.

Six Months

I'm getting out next week to go knock these lil'six months out in the cuts. But I know when I get out, I'm gone be on some grimy shhh!

The one thing that's grimy is I know I'm gone do something real bad when I get out. Why? I can't say. Stay down!

-Tay-Dumpa B4

From The Beat: Well, if you know you're going to do something "real bad" when you get out, then we believe you must like it here! We would hate it here, and we would do what we had to do to stay out. But you already know what leads to the Hall (or worse), so if you go ahead and do it, it's like saying, "Here I am, please put me back in my home away from home." Think about it.

But every time I think about my ninja I got mad as hell and wanted to go off on ninjas.

Angel Vs. Devil

When I get out, no, I mean, if I get out I am going to try my best to listen to my angel. What I mean by angel is the good side of my conscience.

I say the good side because when I'm locked up, I listen to my good side, but as soon as I get out and hit a blunt, my devil comes out.

The devil part of me is my brain and the angel part of me is my heart. I feel like a double-sided person that don't know what to do with myself. I just hope when I get out I just listen to my heart for the first time.

-Deandre B2

From The Beat: We feel what you are saying on there being two sides. What do you think would help you control that devil inside you? If you know that smoking weed is one of the things that triggers the "bad" side of you, do



How I Got Into The Dope Scene

It all started buying some Mary Jane. My dealer pulled out some meth, let me sniff a couple lines. I came back and bought a dub twenty minutes after I left. That first time got me wanting to do it more.

Then I was doing it every day, staying up days to weeks. Stealing DVDs from Blockbuster to get money for my shards. Then I learned how to make it and I had a lab in my backpack and got pulled over for assault and charged with attempt to make dangerous drugs (methamphetamines).

Once I got out I'm going to stay clean of those chemicals.

-Sean

From The Beat: Would you have wanted to quit if you didn't get locked up? How do we know you aren't just talking the talk? What will stop you from using drugs again? If a friend offered you a line, what would you say to him? How would you say no without causing tension between you and him?

Gangster Life

I don't know why I do what I do

maybe I do what I do to keep my rep

I make my life a wreck

just tryin' to keep this rep

I sleep in a four-wall room

I swear to god my life is doom

All I got is time, I can't even bust a rhyme

so I read books to pass the time

I caught a hot one at the age of fifteen

sometimes I sit and wonder if I'll see the age of eighteen

I thought I was surrounded by down g's

but they all turned into fiends

I never was a fiend

I always wanted to be the downest G

but it's plain to see that ain't no real dream

-Chris

From The Beat: Now that you know that ain't no real dream, what do you dream about? Do you still dream fake dreams? Do your homeboys on the streets write you? What about your family? Are they there for you? Would you rather be a down g, or a square that was free?

The Three Strikes Law

How the three strikes law has affected me is that I know to not do anything stupid again. Especially when I'm an adult 'cause I've learned my lesson already and I don't want to go to jail at all, let alone get twenty-five to life.

If I could change that law it would depend on the crime rate. If a crime was up I would give em' less chances like two strikes, 'cause then obviously nobody got the hint with three strikes so get their attention by making it harder.

Or I would make a system that was based on behavior more, like if someone goes to jail for life or more or less I would have someone keep track on how they behave in jail knowing they're going to stay there for a while. Also if they do good they might be let out but one more felony after that they're done, life in jail.

-Frutus

From The Beat: Damn, you're very strict. What if somebody commits an extremely horrific crime, but becomes capable of doing great things for society — should we keep ourselves from advancing as humans because of what this person did in his past? How do you feel about people getting life in prison for stealing a slice of pizza as their third strike? If your system was in place and two strikes didn't lower the crime rate, would you go to one strike? What other factors do you think play into the crime rate?

Innocent Child

They think I'm very pernicious

I told them I'm not vicious

They are recommending six months for the crime that I committed

Now I sit here wishing that I never did it.

I should have never hit him

I should have walked away

Then I wouldn't be here day after

day.

I can't go home just get in more trouble

But I can't stay here in this cement bubble.

I have to go somewhere, this is not my style

I want to start over from the innocent child!

-Teddy

From The Beat: You did what you did, and you recognized that you've done wrong. None of us can turn back time, so now it's time to move on. What did you learn from your mistake? How can you redirect your life? What will it take for you to take control of your fate? You may look in the mirror and see a boy who's devious and wild, but in that poem we still see a very innocent child.

Life, Liberty, And Property

You know sometimes I think what life would be like without laws. Some would refer to life without laws as a state of nature. If there wasn't any laws, then who would most criminals blame? They would be saying things like, "Well, if weed was legal I wouldn't be in here right now." But the truth is if you wouldn't have had that sack of illegal chronic you wouldn't be here right now.

A lot of the people in here make it seem like they want no laws. But when their mothers or family gets robbed or shot, they want justice so they serve it themselves — which shows we can't control ourselves so others do. That's why there's a government to ensure the life, liberty, and property of any human being.

There's a saying I learned in rehab, "If you can't control yourself, others will" And that's what's happening. But then people say, "You're taking my life, liberty, and property away," but that's only because you were taking someone else's. And the government is only doing to you what you tried to do to someone else. Only they're doing it legally.

So next time somebody robs you, or shoots at you, maybe you should do the same thing — have them locked-up. Then the government will rob them of their life, liberty and property — legally!

-Teddy

From The Beat: You have a really strong opinion and we'd like to believe it's as easy as you put it. However, there are many who believe that government doesn't enforce the right to life, liberty, and property equally with respect to all people. Further, there are many who have little, or no, property at all — how do they fit into your equation? More importantly, how have you learned to control yourself? What steps are you taking to make sure you don't let yourself be controlled again?

The System Played Me

What I did to get here wasn't wrong to me because all I was doing was defending my 'hood. Somebody tried to spray up their 'hood in my 'hood. So we had to retaliate. Of course we could of settled it in a better way, but if you know how we live, we can't be seen like a punk.

Anyways what I don't get is how did we do anything wrong if they came to our 'hood trying to disrespect ours. You know we weren't looking for beef, it came to us. You know, how would you feel if someone came to your house disrespecting yours and then, when you defend yourself, you get locked up?

So that's how I feel the system did me wrong, because you know I ain't about to let someone come to my 'hood and destroy it then turn around and lie and say it was us who started beef. But that's all I got to say.

-Drew

From The Beat: Defending something that isn't yours must add a whole lot of stress to your life. That neighborhood was there before you were born, and it will be there when you die, so when is it ever yours? Is the system playing you, or are you playing yourself? Destroying property is destroying property, whether you do it first or in retaliation to someone messing with yours first. You don't have to retaliate, and by doing so, it seems like you punked yourself.

Too Young

Too young to be drinking
my problems I wasn't fixing
can't never be caught slippin'
'till once someone called
the cops because I was
drunk. They came and I started
swinging so I got dropped.

Oh poor ol' me.

I thought alcohol was
the thing that could cure my
pain easily. Oh poor ol' me.

Now at night I drop to
my knees asking God
please set me free. Once
again I'm locked up. Tomorrow
I go to court — I hope
I get out, most likely
I will get out and if I
do this final time, I'm a
do good I'm a solve my
problems the good way not
the stupid way by drinking
and that's what I think
oh better me.

-Javier

From The Beat: Did you find God while you were in jail? Will you pray when you get out? How did alcohol play a role in your incarceration? We know alcohol is easily accessible on the streets, so how will you be able to stay away from it when you get out? Do you think you'll be tempted to drink again? When will you be tempted most? What positive things can keep you away from drinking again?

How would you feel if someone came to your house disrespecting yours and then, when you defend yourself, you get locked up?

Broken Heart

A shattered soul — a broken heart

So much pain — where do I start?

Secret words spoken — fantasies shared

Never had I known someone who actually cared

Undeniable love — intriguing magic

How could this have become something so tragic?

A promise forever ripped at the seams

Hopes for us now they're all just dreams

I am missing you

The only girl I had whose love was true

I'm not able to hold the world in the palms of my hands

But I'm happy to know who can

Listen to me

Take this seriously

Being with you is a miracle.

-Dominic

From The Beat: We are constantly impressed by how well young people express their love. When you were out, was this the only girl you were thinking of? Did you ever cheat? Did you ever creep? Did you ever wish there was another girl you could think about for weeks? What is it about this girl that has you head over heels? We envy you for making your fantasy woman become real.

Weekly Writings



Why We Do The Things We Do

The reason behind the stuff that we do what we do like stealing cars and other stuff that has motors is so we can sell the stuff or go joyriding. When we sell the stuff it is for drugs or for money, and then we take the money and go and buy dope.

We know it's wrong but we do it anyways because we want the drugs and we know that if we get caught that we're going to do some time, but that is the last thing on our minds at the time when we do what we do. The things on our minds are what are homes and think how wealthy we get by doing it.

We get scared of getting shot or stabbed, but that's the chance we take. The drugs are the choice we take over our freedom. It's sad but now it's time to pay the price for our behavior. We sit in our room and think about what we did and cry and say we won't do it again and cry and say that we miss our family, but we should of thought of that before.

-Dustin

From The Beat: All the reasons you listed for doing what you do don't seem like good reasons at all, and you seem to realize this now that you're away from the immediacy of life on the outs. Why do young people do dope? Are a young person's problems so huge that they have to turn to drugs as a way to escape? What could a young person do to escape without using drugs? How are you going to take the feeling of what it's like to sit in your room, missing your family and promising not to do any of this again with you to the outs so that you make good on your promise?

Who Made Me Start That Fight?

Who made me start that fight?

Who made me hit that pipe?

Who made me lie to my parents and stay out all night?

No one but me has the control of me,
so why do I blame the system?

Because the way I see
there were two roads in front of me
and I should be able to walk my one
and see if it turns out to be the wrong one.

-Douglas

From The Beat: Now that you've walked down one of those roads, do you feel like you picked the right one? What road do you want to walk down? Is it still possible for you to walk down that road? Why or why not? Are there any roads that should be off limits? What about roads that stop other folk from having the ability to walk their own road?

I got
confined
for a week
and a
half and
all over
something
funny the
staff said

Everything Is About Points

Everyone who has been locked up as a kid knows about this stupid point system. All you think it was for is discipline and to keep kids in check — wrong! Some of the staff at SEF use it to their advantage.

Well here it goes: we were eating dinner and after we were lining up she said, and I quote, "Line up against the center aisle." As everyone knows the center aisle there is no wall to line up against. So we were still sitting down and I laughed and so did everyone else at my table. So she took a point from everybody at the table, and I got mad because that demoted me. If you got demoted you would be furious.

So when we got back to the unit I was mad as hell — I was a yellow shirt at the time, so I went down to a blue shirt. I was one shirt away from a red shirt, which is the highest shirt color there is.

So now you see why I was so mad, so then I got in a fight with another detainee and got confined, all over one stupid point when she was standing right by the table.

Anyways, so then I got confined for a week and a half and all over something funny the staff said, and she admitted to the fact that what she said was funny. So as you can see this whole point system, we have to go through is a bunch of BS.

-Kevin

From The Beat: It seems like there's a lot of what seems like petty punishment in the Hall. So why doesn't this motivate people to want to get out and stay out? What would you say to somebody who keeps coming back to that place? Do you understand why the staff member was mad at y'all for laughing? Is it the type of situation where you could talk to her and try to explain your side of the situation? Further, even if she was in the wrong for taking the point, that doesn't excuse fighting with another detainee. How can you learn to manage your anger so that you don't redirect it in ways that end up hurting you in the long run?

Manifest Destiny

I once was referred to as nefarious

But when it comes down to it I'm nowhere near the scariest.

I have been told that I'm manically depressed

But really it's the drugs that have me manically obsessed.

With someone who is fake nowhere near to being real

Slowly losing emotions wondering how to feel.

Not a place to run, not a place to hide

Thought I had a crew but no one at my side.

My childhood dreams they somewhere rest in me

My dream is to be successful

My manifest destiny!

-Teddy

From The Beat: What an inspiring piece! If your childhood dreams rest in you, we're grateful to have witnessed the beauty of them unleashed. What caused you to want better for yourself? What was it that made you realize you needed a little help? Do you think you've become more ready for life? Only time will tell, but in the meantime we hope you're right!

Hell

Hell, a place of pain

life, a place of struggle

what you do in life is what you get

what you get is what you do

pain, pain is hurt, hurt is a feeling,

how do you feel, pain can be inside of you

and pain can also be outside of you.

Life, life is what you make it

so make it what you make it and

make it well, not hell.

-Nick

From The Beat: If what you get in life is what you do, then why are you getting what you're getting? Don't you want something more? What do you want out of life? And do you have the necessary things to obtain this goal?

Hey, Are You...

People say I look like Kirsten Dunst. Up in here everyone is callin' me Spider Girl. I guess I can see it, but when I am on the outs I don't think I look like her because I'm all made up.

But I think it's pretty cool I look like Kirsten because she's herself and a beautiful actress.

-Whitney

From The Beat: That's not a bad thing for people to say — at least they aren't saying you look like Martha Stewart. Who do you think you look like? If you could look like anybody in the world, who would it be?

On The Run

On the run I had fun.

Snorting glass and smokin' hash.

Hopping fences so cops couldn't catch me.

Staying up all night and sleeping all day.

Squatin' in abandoned houses.

Eatin' with mouses.

Beggin' for money.

Hey, I thought it was funny.

I lied to the cops when I got stopped.

Oh what a shame, they found out my name.

I was high, what can I say?

I was too high to even know the day.

Excuses, excuses, lies are what they were.

Lee ain't my name, but it was that day.

Tell me again why I ran away.

What I thought was fun out on the run,

Was nothin' but trouble.

-Syc0

From The Beat: Would you still think it wasn't fun if you hadn't gotten caught? With everything you've been through, what would you tell somebody who you thought was following in your footsteps? What would you have needed back then to stop you from doing the things that got you where you are today?

Jail

Oh how fun — jail

Here you don't get out on bail.

The staff drivin' me crazy.

Little girls up in here havin' babies.

My sixth time here and

I'm not goin' home.

It seems to me no one cares.

But I am showing the

people who do care that I don't!

I might get one more chance to

show I care!

I love my family with

all my heart and we will make

it through the struggles.

Now my heart is full of bubbles

Knowing I can show you that I love you!

-Caitlyn

From The Beat: You made the system, and others, believe you were the one who doesn't care since you've been there six times. Why is it so hard to not commit crimes? How many chances do you really need? What will satisfy your greed? Why should people believe you this time around? We hope you find some answers because we hate to see someone with so much potential being brought down.

My
childhood
dreams they
somewhere
rest in me



Voices In Spanish

Esten Trucha

Simon, la razón porque digo trucha es porque cuando estas afuera todo parece estar bien, pero después cuando estas torcido, es ahí donde te das cuenta que tus homies estan hablando tonterías. Por eso les aconsejo que esten trucha.

From The Beat: Este consejo esperamos que muchos lo tomen en cuenta y que se den cuenta quienes son las personas con quienes se deben de juntar. Hay que buscar sus amistades.

Be Careful

Yeah, the reason why I tell you to be careful is because when you are on the outs, everything appears to be fine, but later on when you're locked up, that's when and where you realize that your own homies only speak nonsense. That's why I advice y'all to be careful.

-Chino B4, SF/YGC

En Este Pinche Lugar

Estoy encerrado en un pinche cuarto
Perdiendo el tiempo
Me siento atrapado
Me quitaron mi libertad
Y con el tiempo tengo que pagar
Y con mi morrita no puedo estar
Como morrito en celda me pongo a llorar
Extraño a mi hija
No la puedo olvidar
Está en mi corazón
Esta presión
Mi sufrimiento no encuentra la solución
Me ahogo en mis penas
Quisiera estar afuera
Abrazarla y besarla
Y decirle palabras
Decirle que yo sin ella
No soy nada
Este es mi destino
Así Dios lo quiso
Extraño a mi hija
La quiero connmigo.

From The Beat: Chale, Chiquilin se nota que estas sufriendo por tu chava, qu emala onda que estes aqui y ella esté afuera. Nosotros de ti, nunca la dejara sola y

procuraria de nunca hacerlo. Sal de este lugar y mantente a su lado si la quieres tanto.

In This Freaking Place

I'm locked up in a freaking room
Wasting my time
I feel trapped
They took away my freedom
And I have to pay with time
And I can't be with my female
Like a little boy, I start to cry in my cell
I miss my girl
I can't seem to forget about her
She's in my heart
In this prison,
My suffering cannot find the solution to
my problem
I drown myself in my sorrow
I wish I was outside
Hugging and kissing her
And telling her things
Tell her things like without her
I'm nothing
This is my destiny
That's how God wanted it
I miss my girl
I want her with me.

-Chiquilin, 150 Crew

Cuando Miro Afuera De mi Ventana

Cuando miro afuera de mi ventana, quisiera estar libre, vivir tranquilamente sin ningún problema con la ley, quiero gozar de la libertad, trabajar para cumplir mi sueño.

Mi sueño es ayudar a mi familia que se encuentra en Honduras. Quiero sacarlos adelante de todos problemas que enfrentan económicamente.

From The Beat: Esta bien que tengas ese deseo de sacar a la familia adelante. Acuérdate que estas en este mundo por algún propósito, y deberías de ver eso y dejarte de cometer errores que esten atrasando tu sueño.

When I Look Out My Window

When I look outside my window, I would like to be free to live in peace without any problems with the law. I want to enjoy what freedom offers and work so I can achieve my dream.

My dream is to help my family that is in Honduras. I want to help them get out of whatever problem it is that they face economically.

-J-Boogie B5, SF/YGC

La Regue

Extraño a mi familia muchísimo, mucho más de lo que pensaba. Pero yo la regue porque, desde un comienzo, debí haber mantenido mis cosas rectas. Lo que hubiera hecho fue haber hecho las cosas que mi PO me dijo que hiciera, pero me valió madre.

From The Beat: Bueno amigo, ahora que más nos queda que arrepentirnos por lo sucedido. Esperamos que no vuelvas a regarla.

I Messed Up

I miss my family a whole lot, more than I thought I would. I messed it up because I should have, from the beginning, done things the right way. What I should have done were the things that my PO told me to do, but back then I didn't give a damn.

-Pelón, 150 Crew

Mi Graduación

Cuando yo estaba illendo a la escuela, estaba haciendo muy bien en todas mis clases, pero después mis calificaciones empezaron a bajar poco a poco. Esa fue la razón porque no me pude graduar de high school. Y para terminar empecé a tener problemas con unos vatos de otras pandillas.

Un día yo y mis homies fuimos a madriarnos con otros en una escuela y los guardias de la escuela me agarraron, me llebaron a la dirección, me suspendieron de la escuela y es por eso que yo no pude graduerme de la high school.

From The Beat: Para que aprendas amigo que cuando las cosas se tienen que tomar en serio por ejemplo las cosas de escuela, son importantes y no se debe cambiar por ninguna cosa en este mundo. Pero siempre hay una segunda oportunidad, no la dejes perder otra vez. Mira que estas joven y todavía puedes hacer mucho.

My Graduation

When I was going to school, I started off doing very well in all my classes, but then my grades started to decline little by little. That was the reason why I could not graduate from high school, and to make things worse, I started to have problems with some fools from other gangs.

One day, me and my homies went to go mop some of our rivals at another school, and the security guards there apprehended me; they took me to that school's principal's office after I got expelled from school. That's why I have not graduated from high school yet.

-Shadow, 150 Crew

Lo Que Les Dijera

Lo que yo le diría a los niños es que sus padres fueron buenas personas pero con defectos. Ellos murieron porque Dios les dió un trabajo muy especial para ellos y que pase lo que pase, sus padres los estaran cuidando a ellos desde donde sea que esten. Aunque ellos no esten en la tierra para ayudarlos cuando los necesiten, ellos desde donde esten los van a proteger y a cuidar.

Y que sus madres van a cuidarlos como su madre y padre a la misma vez.

From The Beat: Es una gran honor saber que hay personas que quieren de verdad y que hacen lo posible para que la gente se sienta bien. Nos gustaria que alguna persona igual que tú, con tus sentimientos se les acerque a estos niños y los hagan sentir bien.

What I Would Tell Them

What I would tell the kids who have lost their fathers is that their fathers were good people, but with some minor problems. Also, I would tell them that their fathers passed away because God gave them a very special job to do and that no matter what may happen, their fathers will continue to watch over them wherever it is that they may be. Even though their fathers may not be on Earth when they need them, their fathers, from wherever they are, will continue to protect and watch over them.

To Homie

It's hard, homie, putting these words into a song
But now that you're gone and I'm all alone
Harmful thoughts are just falling through my dome
I'm sorry if my voice is getting eerie
But every time I think about you,
I get tired.

Si supieras lo que hicistes (If you only knew what you did)
Dejastes a tus padres bien tristes (You left your parents very sad)

No es un chiste (It's not a joke)
Caistes en el cementerio a los 18 años (You ended up in the cemetery at the age of 18)
Nomás por un paño (over a rag)

Y el barrio que querás tanto como le pagó (And a 'hood that you loved so much you ended up giving your life for it)
Me acuerdo en esos tiempos desmadrosos (I remember during those crazy times)

Unos mocosos jungando en los pasos (We were little kids playing in the streets)

We grew up
Went out to the valley
Looking for enemies

Listo para desmadres (Ready for whatever)

That was an everyday thing
Until the day my jefecito (father) gave me that news
And my tears just starting pouring
Rest in peace to my carnal (brother), Choco.

-Mina, Hillcrest

From The Beat: Chale que rola tan triste amigo. Esperamos que donde sea que el esté que se porte bien, que pueda encontrar la paz y el descanso. Ojalá esto no te pase a ti también porque seria muy doloroso que pasara algo así. Amigo, hay que ponerse a pensar lo que realmente uno quiere en la vida.

The Beat Within/Without 9th Editor's Note Contest

What have you done in your life that you wish you could do over, and how would you go about doing it over?

From The Beat: OK readers, this week we are featuring the final installment of pieces from our 9th Editor's Note Writing Contest. Last week we share the first crop of writings in issue 9.14, and by issue 9.17 we will announce and rerun the top pieces, which will be voted on by us — The Beat editors and facilitators. If you don't know by now, the following writers answered the following question: "What have you done in your life that you wish you could do over, and how would you go about doing it over?"

Sure, we expected the obvious replies, about not doing the crime that put you in the system, going to school, abiding to your family, probation/parole, gang life, the game etc. Then again, many of you

stepped up big with great detail as you shared a part of your life, and envisioned on paper a way of doing or reliving something over. The following pieces definitely give us a scenario that take us into your world, from showing us the equation, the pros and cons, to the limited and numerous choices you came up with.

Before you dive into the pieces, the cool part is that the top voters of this contest will receive prize money! Our top prize is a \$100 money order for first place, followed by a \$50 money order for second place, and for third and fourth place, \$25 money orders.

If it's all about the money, we encourage you to check out our next editor's note contest question on page 2!

William Thurston California State Prison- Solano, Vacaville

Second Chances

Dear Beat,

As an individual, up until this particular point in my life, certain aspects of my being have been in shambles and in dire need of a complete overhaul. The solution: a re-birthing of my mortal self — mind, body, spirit, and soul. To be a newborn again, but growing with a full and complete awareness of all the wrong paths chosen, the wrong choices and decisions I've made, and with the cravings to go, see and accomplish. I'd venture to all the unique places I've failed to go, see all the sights I've failed to see, and accomplish all the goals I've failed to achieve.

But there are certain experiences in my present life that I'd dare not change. For instance, if I could be re-born, I'd choose to live and grow in all the same neighborhoods and I'd wear the same clothes. I'd ride the same bikes and mow the same lawns. I'd sweep the same sidewalks and kiss the same girls. I'd kick the same balls. Climb the same trees. Race the same Hot Wheels and sit in the middle of the same streets with the same ol' friends telling and listening to the same stories that I used to listen to and tell.

I'd choose to go to the same movie theaters and watch the same movies over and over again. I'd work the same jobs, meet the same people, admire the same cars, and play with the same video games (Donkey Kong and Pac-Man). I'd hang out at the same pool halls and shoot pool with the same brothers who were so much older than me. I'd eat the same meals at Little Momma's House of Soul and I'd fall in love with the same girl, just as I did as a young boy growing up in this present life.

All these things I've done as a young boy, but being so caught up with it all that I didn't realize that the more I put into my "away from home" activities, the more my "at home" priorities I'd been neglecting. Yes, of course, I was a kid, therefore my mother wanted me to be a kid and do what kids do (have friends, go places, see things, the whole kid experience) just as long as I was happy and not causing

havoc or getting myself hurt or killed.

But during all those years as I ripped and ran the streets, I'd failed to see that I wasn't giving my mother the most important thing of all — peace of mind. The peace of mind of knowing, I mean "really" knowing, that someone was there for her. I mean "really-really" there. There will never be any doubts that I've always loved my mother with all my heart and soul, and that I've always respected her and the difficult decisions she had to make as a single parent, but as a child, I didn't know the significance or the power of love or how to quite express that love.

Today I'm forty-one years old, and I look at the pictures of my mother that have been with me during my fifth prison experience; as I look deeply into the stillness of her eyes, I can see all that I'd not been able to see when I was a child. In my mother's eyes, I see many, many years of loneliness now (though she'll never admit it). I see too many years of heartache and despair.

In my mother's eyes I see all the pain and suffering. My pain and suffering, resulting from the every second. The every minute. The every hour. The days, weeks, months, and years I've lived within the belly of the beast (behind prison walls). In my mother's eyes, I can clearly see now that I've never done one single day of this time alone, for she has spent each and every one of those moments here, inside, with me. Not in a physical sense (though my constant incarcerations have affected her health), but in an emotional, mental, and spiritual way.

So, in response to the Editor's Note question: "What have you done in your life that you wish you could do over?" Be born again! That would be my sincerest reply. Having a second chance to live up to my own expectations as a man, father, brother, son, and to show my mother that what she had in me was so much more than just a young child who turned her hair gray, so much more than just a spoiled little brat who worried her silly twenty-four hours a day. What's her favorite color? Her favorite book or song? What's her favorite food? I'm ashamed having to admit that I've failed to remember.

Yes, to be born again, that's what I'd wish for. A second chance at life. A second chance to correct the mistakes. To right the wrongs and to show my mother that, other than a son, she has, and would forever have, a very, very close and personal friend in me.

The Beat Within/Without

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Cesar Hernandez Corcoran State Prison, Corcoran, California

Do It Over . . . Would I Do It Over?

Well, I decided to enter your contest; frankly your topic sparked and interest in me. So I decided to share my tale:

This probably isn't going to start as you might expect. See, after careful consideration — and a trip down memory lane — I've realized most of the things I've been through I can't honestly say I regret (though most people would, for good reason). So let's take a journey down my past and see if I can help explain my conclusion.

Let's start with the so-called "wrong crowd." True, I was a part of this group, but I also held many friends in the so-called "right crowd." I can't say I regret my friendship with either crowd. Though people might think the "wrong crowd" would just be a bad influence, I learned many valuable things from this crowd I would not have learned anywhere else. For example, how to stand up for what one believes in or to just simply be yourself and not what others expect you to be. In many ways, the "right crowd" has been just as helpful, and as well, has also contributed to many bad influences. So all in all, whether "good" or "bad" crowd, the learning I received was equal, and in many ways, worth it.

Drugs. Well, before I get into this subject, let me explain something about myself. I've always been a very curious person, always wanting to know the answer. If asked something I didn't know, I would research till I did know. So you could imagine my first thought when someone would tell me drugs are no good was "Why?" So since no one seemed to have this answer, I went in search of one. So I dabbled in drugs (Dabbled! What an understatement; I've tried about all there was) and this is once again something people would and should regret, but it's something I wouldn't take back, because through my using (and abusing) I managed to understand the ups and downs, the pains— emotional, physical, mental. I now have the answer, though not without some suffering. But if I tell my children or anyone for that matter that drugs are no good and they ask why, I'm able to explain and to help them see and understand.

Sex. Though it comes with certain pleasures, this one took me awhile to understand the dangers and responsibilities of. Whether

protected or unprotected, sex is a hard game to play because a lot is riding on it if you lose! So like before, people told me it was better to wait, to better understand. "Understand what?" I would ask. And well, my curiosity got the best of me once again. Even though I was lucky not to have caught any STDs, I did manage to conceive a now six-year-old daughter I don't even know. Even though you may surely think, "You must regret that," I don't. Not to sound cruel, but if not for this experience, I would never have put a value on human life, relationships and family, something I'll never take for granted again, so not even this would I do over.

Doing time. Now this one is difficult, because I have yet to meet people that will say they don't regret being busted. But I have to think of all the good things it taught me: how much those on the outside truly mean to me, how to hold my own. How easy I had it out there with people to support me through my tough times (if only smart enough to ask). And most importantly, the true value of "freedom," something you never know till it's taken away. These things I probably would have never learned otherwise.

Well, let me wrap this up. First, I'm not saying there aren't better and easier ways, and I don't want readers to believe you "must" live through all this in order to have a better life. No, my point is that people like myself already have and cannot only point you in the right direction, but can explain to you why. But the first step is yours . . . to ask!

I guess to sum it all up, what I want to say is: Don't look down on the bad times in your life. It's not about regretting, it's about learning and teaching it to someone else! Something I once read and will always keep in mind and hope you will, too: "In life, there are no such things as mistakes, only learning from life's experiences."

Note: To all those who have children, remember: it's easy to tell a child which road to take, but difficult to explain why. Don't be ashamed of your past, let your children see you've been there and why they shouldn't go there. Trust me, if someone would have explained to me why, it would have saved me a long journey and will save your children one as well.

So in conclusion, after reviewing everything, I wouldn't do it over any different. Though if I did, I would most likely have many positive things to contribute, but I might have become one of those trying to help by telling you, you shouldn't do "this" or "that," but not being able to explain why — so how much help would I truly be? So that's why it would all be done the same if the chance was available. Even though I suffered, I've learned. And one day (hopefully) what my struggles and pain taught me I might use to help at least one person from following my footsteps!

Well that brings an end to our journey, hope you found it insightful as well as enjoyable. Thank you Beat and readers for your time. I'll now excuse myself as I came . . .

Abasai Juvenile Hall No More Excuses

Many people use their position in life as an excuse to hold their actions to, an excuse that they think will exclude them from having to stand behind their actions. These depressing positions are being economically and financially poor, family problems, an absent father figure and/or mother figure, traumatic moments in their childhoods, or just the feeling of being neglected and/or not being loved. These are reasons or positions they choose to accept as a way of not having to deal with the guilt brought on by their actions or their ways of life. They respond with these excuses when confronted with the question, "Why'd you do it?" because they are aware there really isn't any good reason. One knows where their life is going to lead them. No one is dumb enough to not know that the life we lead will get us nowhere except in prison or dead. It's true that these positions will bring one down and get one depressed, but these are the life lessons that we are going to be faced with. But we will have to be strong and not let it bring us down.

I always see The Beat writers end their pieces with, "Don't let no one or anything bring you down." But saying

that those "depressing positions" are the fault of their ways of life is letting something bring them down.

I recently got a letter from a cousin asking why I did it, and another one from my aunt on my dad's side of the family saying it was my dad's fault. I started thinking about the question and statement, and I realized that one asked and the other responded with the only answer I had.

But if I could go back in life and do something over, it's using this reason as my answer and excuse to that question, because that shows weakness as far as staying strong and enduring life lessons. The pro about this lesson is overcoming it and making me stronger, not physically but mentally. One should be strong and overcome things like this and get experience from it. The con about it is that it is something that will eat one up and get them depressed. But as I said earlier, these are life lessons.

Another and final thing I regret is realizing this right now, but then again, it is better now than never. Don't think that just because you are in here there ain't nothing you could do. Open your eyes and look at all the positives instead of the negatives. Look at the big picture and understand that this life ain't going to get us nowhere. I just want to tell you guys to build strengths from life lessons, not weaknesses. All these are minor bumps on the road to happiness. You might be locked up physically, but if you educate yourself, your mind will be as free as an eagle's.

Mauricio Funes

Pelican Bay State Prison,

Crescent City, California

Inside These Paredes (Walls)

¿Cómo estan, Raza (How are you people)? Let me tell you all what I have done and wish I could do over. Como todo ser humano (like any human being) full of imperfecciones (imperfections), we have the tendency to be troublesome, even cuando no queremos (when we don't want to) or know about it. La más ignorante (The most ignorant), crazy, and idiotesca cosa (stupidest thing) that I have done was to be initiated into la vida loca of the barrios, and like some of you, me encontraba en un país (I was found myself in a country) far away from mine with a diferente (different) culture and language. I felt out of place.

Also, como muchos (like many) others, I found myself disliking living at home, you know, like every youngster raised in an average low-income family with problems that go from not having an authority figure or mentor to look up to at home, to serve as example and inspiration, to having many small siblings and not getting along con mi padrastro (with my step-dad), and above all, with sentido de adventure y (thoughts of adventure and) curiosity running through the veins, so piense que sería (I thought it would be) smart and better to dejar (leave) that life behind and move to better pastures.

Now thinking back, I should have stayed en casa (at home) and dealt/negotiated with my parents, because when I entered the barrio, instead of going to greenish pastures, I found myself on a path full of rocks, broken glass, and espinas (thorns) — tu sabes (you know), the criminal, scamming, addictive and cruel life of gangs. I left my home for the cold and rough streets, starving for affection, comprehension and camaradas (comrades) who spoke my lengua (language) and was of the same background.

Y en lugar de eso (and instead of that), I found people, "so-called" homies," hablando mi lengua con doble significado (speaking my language with a double meaning) like vipers poisoning everyone and everything, and confusing la verdad (the truth) with manipulation, friendships for favoritismo (favoritism), and loyalty with victimization. Some are so caught up in that lifestyle that they don't know that what they are doing is está mal malo y equivocado (bad and wrong). Ya perdieron (They lost) their individualism because in a blink of an eye, they will exploit, stab, or kill a fellow camarada (homie) for their own selfish razón (reason), or I hear them say things without feelings and remordimientos (remorse). Then they claim that todo (everything) is done for the better/good of the barrio.

It is easy to patronize others and get into that mood, but what a young vato loco don't understand or doesn't want to comprehend is that by doing that, we are changing nuestras propia (our own) identity, because that is not how one is, nor is it our nature. Crime crea más crimen (creates more crimes), and so does violence, vandalismo, vagancia (vagrancy), and drogadicción (drug addiction). Everyone joined the barrio for a totally different reason or situation; therefore, everyone has un diferente prospecto (a different perspective) on the significado (meaning) of what homeboy/homies is.

The barrio is not your home. But with problems at home, tú enfrenta la realidad (you confront the reality) the same way a homie/homeboy misguided you and accept/deal with their wicked and perverso (perverse) ways. Dealing with the problems at home is not hard — ármate de valor como lo haces (arm yourself with courage like you do) when a "homie" tells you to commit a crime or vandalize something or someone's house. One might think that one is being asked to do those things, but in reality, we are manipulated and one of them times, those actions will lead us to our destruction. We will either end up in a hospital bed, hurt, stabbed, shot, dead, or even behind bars — as I find myself. These are the consequences

all us gangbangers/cholos face at one time or another for not facing our problems, and for tentar al diablo entrando (tempting the devil by going) into something blind that one has no idea of the depth and corrupt ways of the gangs/barrios. Then, when we face prison and one enters these walls, those same so-called homies don't exist anymore, they're in their own world and you are not part of their circle.

Think about it, comrade. Use your wisdom and advance mentally as an individual, because more likely, the same homies that got you into this mess will be out there waiting for you as if nothing happened, as if it wasn't their own fault, and once again, they will try to manipulate you if you are not trucha (careful) or advanced, because they themselves don't wanna get/be caught.

Inside the prison, there is another story. There are those who also prey on the young and study people, and right away, they pick up your weakness and try to persuade you or mold you to their expectations and purposes, and of this be aware. I came into the prison thinking that I was gonna do my time and enjoy the privileges that the system has to offer, and rehabilitate myself to be a better person within these walls. But then I was confronted with the dilemma that since I was running with a neighborhood on the streets, I must choose to be in or out of the gang within the prison. I was told that if I choose not to go with the grain/flow, I was gonna be ignored, be left behind to be picked on by the rival gangs, and that my safety depended on what I choose there and then. As time went by, I discovered that all that was a lie. Not everyone preyed on those that wanted to do their time. That is, all you needed to do was respect others and know your boundaries, that I did not need to deal with all the drama and stressful pressure that this lifestyle demands of its members/associates. The fact of the matter is that without wanting to, I became aware of my surroundings. Therefore, for those who find themselves in my situation, prepare yourself for what is about to become.

In my case, I made the wrong choice. I bit into their word games and let myself be poisoned by their wicked and corrupt tongue, thinking that their morals and values fit me. I was fed a picture/image that was not true; they were hiding their true purpose behind a motive. These individuals can be your best friends one day and your worst enemies the next. As the good old song says, be aware of the hand you shake. I was sweet-talked and bit like a baby to do things that I normally wouldn't have done and would shock the average individual — things that never would have crossed my mind. And now I sincerely regret them.

These individuals don't care how much you have done or sacrificed for them or their cause, the slightest mistake or slip of the tongue, "say the wrong thing to the wrong individual," and it would get you into trouble, and they would not hesitate to hurt or even kill you. The rules and their regulations at first made sense, but as time went by, one starts to notice that no one strictly followed them. They who make them break them, and demand/want that you follow them. They are hypocrites; they constantly remind you that you are entitled to your opinion, but the truth is that your opinions and views do not count, only their idealistic views.

It took me a long time to recognize and realize my wrongdoing and wrong choice, but as time went by, I flourished and matured and started to accept myself for what I am. It takes a man to realize his faults. Without realizing I was tripping myself with each step I was taking, without looking where I was stepping. I finally saw the light and decided to do the right thing, not for the cause or struggle, but for my own self.

Many would think being put in a protected custody unit is the easy way to go out, and I'm sure many would like to take this path but are too concerned with what others will think of them without realizing that all they are doing is hurting themselves. It is beautiful to express and feel good about yourself. Now I'm allowed to write all this without repercussions.

The principle and moral of me writing you guys all this is to let you know that the key to happiness is to loving yourself and being at peace with yourself.

**instead of going to greenish pastures, I found myself on
a path full of rocks, broken glass, and espinas (thorns)**

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Traviesa Alameda County Juvenile Hall

Why I'm Gay

i woke up
it was a normal day
got dressed
went downstairs for head count
then i see my patna tiffany
and she cryin'
i ask what's up
she said she can't take it no mo'
this her first program
and she ready to run
i already ran once
so i know i can't afford to no mo'
so instead i support her to stay
but she don't wanna hear me
she had her mind made up
and outta i-don't-know-where
my best friend cortney come
sayin' wit' or wit'out me
she leavin'
so i say fuhgit it
and tell them they ain't both leavin' me
"i'm goin' wit' y'all"
so we make a plan
to go to the next-door neighbor's house
because he always help out tha a-w-o-l-ers
so once we get to his house
he all for it
and tell us to wait in his car
so when he comes down
he asks us where we wanna go
and we say we ain't trippin'
so we go to his house
so it's three females and only two dudes
so i'm the one makin' sure nothin' happens
so he bought some drank
and he got some 'e'
coke and some purple
so after an hour we all on one
and i pass out
when i wake up the dude says
he took my patna cortney back to the group home
so i'm ready to go

but he said he gonna drop us off at this dude's house
my patna tiffany say she know them
so i'm thinkin' it's all coo'
next thing i know this dude beat her ass
so i jump in
and one of his patnas pulls us off him
i tell her i'm leavin'
but they tell me
"you ain't goin' nowhere"
they like six or seven deep
so it's not like i'm gonna fight them all off
so for four days they keep me locked up
and we ain't allow' to use the phone or leave the house
so they tell me i gotta either hoe or grind
i told them i ain't doing neither
so they pull a gun on me
and told me i was gonna choose
so i pick grind
so they took me to seventeenth an' mission by thei' house
and they got like four heads watchin' me
and tiffany ain't wit' me
they took her on the second day somewhere
and never brought her back
it's for like an hour i'm out there
and i get tired of it
so this dude come by
and everyone say he undercover
so i sell to him
next thang i know here come the bikes
and i don't run
i jus' let them get me
it was a stupid plan
but it worked
i got sales an' possession
and i swore to myself
i would never be wit' a dude ever again
and i've kept that promise
post script: tiffany
wherever you at girl
i love you and i hope you all right
and p's k (at walden house)
your program is a good program
and i hope it continues to help kids like it did me
and thanks jackie
and i love you breeyana, my big sister
i'm out

I wish I could go back and had never awol'ed and put myself in that position I was in. That's the one thing I wish I could do over. I would have put mo' effort into supportin' my patnas to stay at tha group home. I would have made better choices.

**they tell me i gotta either hoe or grind
i told them i ain't doing neither**

Shawn Rogers Pelican Bay State Prison, Crescent City, Ca. Rewinding The Hands of Time

Rewind back to San Quentin
Before I transferred to Pelican Bay.
Rewind back to County Jail, where the
Judge took my life away.
Rewind back to my trial, facing 25 to life
I took a chance.
Rewind back to me accepting responsibility
For my foolish actions with a warrior's stance
Rewind back to Juvenile Hall, a precocious kid
In a man's body.
Rewind back to that cold night I

Fired the heat on somebody.
On that night, picture my aggression
My desires, my fears — my gangsterism
Manifested, my essence is clear.
Rewind back to me being a follower
Instead of taking the position to lead.
Rewind back to my alcoholism, my head
Spins while my liver bleeds.
Rewind back to my inauguration
Joining a gang was my worst mistake, but my
Level of thugitry had to enhance —
Subconsciously I accommodated the hands of fate.
Rewind back to me putting my so-called
Friends before my family, not yet realizing
That family love is everlasting — love from
My friends comes sporadically.
Rewind back to my childhood years
Virgin eyes penetrated — I cried, but no
One listened. I guess my tears were underrated.
Rewind back to my birth who knew what my
Future would behold — now fast forward to reality
I reap what I sowed.

Young Bouncer

High Desert State Prison,

Susanville, CA

Me And Pops

In life, as everybody knows, there are good times, and with those good times come bad ones as well. Sure, there are times that I sit in my box and think that if I would of done this different, maybe . . . but I know that if I go through this time that I'm doing with my mind frame focused on "maybe", then I'll be doing the "maybe" thing for years to come!

I've been wild since the days of a youth. I've been on this path for as long as I can remember. This is what I wanted to do. Now that I'm doing it, I have no shame at what I do. I'm not talking about prison when I say this, I'm talking about life in general.

I've focused my mind, body, and soul on becoming the man I am on the inside as well as on the outside. I'm in prison for being careless in my actions and in my decisions. Living life comes with living lessons as well, but if you do not realize your lessons while you're living them and improve your actions for the betterment of your life, then you're living life blind. With every day, I grow in my mind and learn lessons in life. I'm aware of my surroundings as well. I'm also aware of my self-improvement. Indeed, to be the best man that I can be starts with small steps and continues with small steps until the change and growth is complete!

Something that I would change in my past is my relationship I had with my pops before he passed away. Let's talk about big Billy Wolfington for a few minutes! Let's also talk about life growing up with his presence in our household.

My pops was a committed hustla to the game. His profession was slanging hop to the fiends in need of that fix to get through the day without running around like they got a deadly disease. I'm sure that I gained a lot of traits from him growing up, gained a lot of knowledge from paying attention to the ways he ran his game. The way you bag up the junk, one gram is worth \$100 — unless you're a savage at what you do and make twelve dime sacks out of that gram, which also came with a mouthful of game that's spit at the

transaction!

Everybody has to eat one way or another, so I knock him for nothing and love him for everything. I was raised by my pops and my step-mom (RIP). As a kid, we never took trips anywhere, nor did we shop too much, but we did eat everyday and we stayed warm.

By the age of 8, I was out kickin' it with the homies and staying out late. Sometimes we'd be out all night pulling burglaries from time to time. At the age of 10, I was smoking weed and drinking with the homies just doing my own thing, not going to school, not doing too much in general, just enjoying life the way I knew how.

When I was twelve years old, my mom passed away and that's when things took a turn for the worse. Pops fell off his game at age 62, which in turn I grabbed the sack and got my grind on at thirteen.

If I could change one thing, I would have spent more time with my pops for the last few years of ol' boy's life instead of pulling G-rides all night and getting my bang on with the homies to the fullest. I would have spent some time to learn about, and get to know the past of my father that I know such little about. If I regret anything it's that right there. For some reason I knew that he was going to pass, or I had strong feeling that his time was running short. When I got caught up for GTA was the last time I spoke to him. I got my one phone call that was not collect and I called him. I told him that I would be gone for a few months and that I love him. I think I told him that I loved him a few times in that short conversation we had that day, and as fate would have it, he passed away two months later.

The thing that I wouldn't change is that last conversation me and him had that day, me on my way to a cell and him on his way to heaven. God works in ways that one may not be able to understand until the future comes.

Here we are, four years later, and I 'm at the age of 20 in a cell, him in heaven. The hands of time turn so fast and here I am sitting in a cell, in a different place, on a bigger yard, with staff that got bigger guns, in a taller tower, with smaller freedom! But with all that, I've learned while strugglin' through the system that I'll be a harder felon to bring back to this system!

Much love to all who maintain to strive through to break these chains! By gaining knowledge, we gain power and with power we will rise above these haters who work to keep us imprisoned. If we lay down, we'll stay down. If we fight back, we'll soon have our rights back!

Respectfully!

I cried at the funeral, no words to escape my mouth. Tears express my feelings, my sorrow. My family slowly died to nothing.

Flaco

Juvenile Hall

What I Would Change

Memories from my childhood slip through my mind as I lie uncomfortable on my bunk. I block the scenes away that are an old me that no longer exists. I have to concentrate on my present self and my present situation. But I suppose in order to answer your question I must concentrate on the past, because the thing I would want to do over lies far in my past but is still playing a major role in my life. It all started two months before my 11th birthday when I was still a free child.

The backbone of my family lies within a big soul and a jolly heart, my mother's pa and my grandfather. This one man has held together many people with his words; his kind, gentle face; and most of all, his presence. An all around loving man, he used to gather up all of his grandchildren to conduct trips in his van — trips to cut bundles of grapes and eat them with loved ones during the sunset. There was a special bond between the children and their grandfather that not another soul could mimic. Plans and preparation were taking place for David's birthday.

Then the terrible day came when news reached my ears my grandfather was in the hospital suffering like no man should. God was holding my grandfather's life in the palm of his hand.

The moms, dads, uncle and aunts would not let the children go to the hospital to see their superhero grandfather. We were left in the dark because of the fact that the children were not able to comprehend the significance of the situation.

Time passed in a blur, with the tick of every second that passed our thoughts lay within our grandfather's heart.

It was a dark morning when the call came. The whole family was at my grandfather and grandmother's house showing support and giving comfort when one of my aunts woke up and answered the phone: my big pa was on the verge of dying. He needed the family to be there when he took his last breath and said goodbye to the cruel world.

The children were not woken up as the adults were leaving. My cousin woke up and was allowed to go. Most of us were still sleeping when our parents came back home. I guess the pain and agony was too much to bear within their small hearts. Tears exploded from each person. At this moment I awakened from my deep sleep of worries to hear the news that my mother whispers in my ear through hoarse cries. It hits me with extreme pain and misunderstanding. How can my superhero pass away? How can God allow my knight in shining armor to disappear and to leave me unprotected and vulnerable to the outside world?

I cried that morning; I cried that night. I cried at the funeral, no words to escape my mouth. Tears express my feelings, my sorrow. My family slowly died to nothing.

What I would have done over is say goodbye to my grandfather, tell him how much he meant to me. How he was the one person who could have led our family to better things. How to me he was better than Superman. And most of all, how precious his love and friendship were to me. Also, I would have to ask him if I made him proud to be my grandfather.

I would have had spoken my mind to my family, telling them that my grandpa was the most important person in my life, that I needed to see him for the last time and hear the tender words that I know he'd say to me.

Shakey Central California Women's Facility State Prison, Chowchilla, California

That Night

In all of the trials and tribulations in my life, save but one, I've dared to grow beyond the impact of choices and consequences born of my actions. One realizes that life is a maze of reality in living it. That reality brings about the ponderance of choice. In the solitude of choice, the mind succumbs to the arrest of thought. "Do or die" — the simplicity of the statement is paradoxical to the premise of ideologies upon which it rests, as well as the physical manifestation that comes to take shape upon execution.

In reflection, the ignorance of my youth and my myopic vision would not allow me to see a future beyond the implementation of my actions. At the time it seemed as if I swam the breadth, length, and depth of the river of poor judgment. Eventually, I found the depth of that river in the face of death . . . the death of my first-born child, my daughter, Kaliyah.

The art of healing has taught me that even in the silence of death of one, there is for another the voice of life for many. The Creator in all of His infinite wisdom gave all of humanity the freedom to choose and the power to create.

So attaching to the latter, and shaping and holding the former, I've dared to share my experiences for the first time with The Beat Within.

If I could relive the pivotal experiences in my life, it would be my first time giving life and having the obligation of the cold finality of death, because in these two experiences I had to say goodbye to the one true love of my life. Kaliyah died March 4, 1995 at four months old, and I was 19 years old at the time. Even at such a relatively young age in motherhood, I had committed myself to being the best mother that I could be.

One night when I put her to bed for the night, my life was forever changed. When I went in her room to kiss her once again good night, I found that my baby girl had secretly slipped away from me into another world of happiness, and I was alone in this world of sorrow and pain. I tried to revive her by performing CPR, but I soon discovered that it was too late.

So if I could relive that night, Kaliyah would still be here to enjoy the best of her youth and adulthood. She would be here smiling and playing as thriving children do. She would be asking the inquisitive questions that curious kids do. She would be here declaring to me and the rest of the world what career field she would making her stake in, in the future.

On the other end of the spectrum, my view as a mother would be enriched by watching my child grow up. I would've seen firsthand the tender moments of hugs and kisses, the Mother's Day cards made by her hands at arts and crafts time at school, the excitement in her eyes when she discovered new information, the proud look on her face at the satisfaction of her independent achievement and accomplishment. And the final piece of poetry wouldn't be in honor of the memory of her death and what it came to signify in my heart and mind, but instead serve as a testament of a celebration of the milestones of achievement in her life.

**Death cut those memories
with a permanent knife.**

**If I could relive that night,
Kaliyah would still be here to
enjoy the best of her youth and
adulthood. She would be here
smiling and playing
as thriving children do.**

Dirge of Death

The laughter
The cries
The hugs
The kisses

The walks
The talks
The meals
I miss this.

Your first tooth
Your first steps
Your first words
What is it like?
Death. I've never heard.

Your first day of school
Your first graduation
What is it like?
Death took anticipation.

Your homework
Your school clothes
What is it like?
Death only knows.

"Don't make me late for work!"
"Mama, I got to iron my shirt."
What is it like?
Death. All I saw was dirt.

Money for school
Brand new toys
Watching out for lil' boys
Teaching you to sit with girlish poise
What is it like?
Death continues to roar.

The high school prom
"Oh, that's my song"
All night on the phone.
"Kaliyah, it's time to come home."
What is it like?
Death. I'll never know.

College
See you off in life.
Marriage.
Now you're a wife.
Motherhood.
You gave life.
What is it like?
Death cut those memories with a permanent knife.

What is it like?
Tears of death for the rest of my life.

BRANDON MARTINEZ

Brandon Martinez, one of The Beat Within's most prolific writers, has many diverse writing styles and a myriad of subjects he likes to write about. This week he has written an essay on the danger of antidepressants, especially for children; a poem remonstrating President George Bush about the war in Iraq, and an Easter poem written for God. He writes us that Ruben "Hurricane" Carter is looking over the documents in his case, and may become an advocate for him in the "Innocence Project" that helped free Carter. Thanks for all your amazing work! Brandon Martinez writes us from California State Prison - Lancaster.

Antidepressants

The possibility that a group of widely prescribed antidepressants, including Prozac and Paxil, might trigger suicide and other violence in a small percentage of users, has been the subject of isolated reports in the major media since they first arrived on the market. Recently, however, the concern has been recognized by the federal government.

In June 2003, following actions taken by British drug authorities, the FDA released a statement recommending that physicians refrain from prescribing Paxil to new patients under eighteen.

Paxil is one of a class of drugs known as selective serotonin inhibitors (SSRIs). Studies funded by the drug's maker, GlaxoSmithKline, showed it was not more effective than placebos for treating pediatric depression. The same studies also showed an increased occurrence of emotional disturbance in those taking it. The likelihood of a suicide attempt, for example, was about three times greater for Paxil users than for those taking placebos.

In August, Wyeth Pharmaceuticals drew essentially the same conclusions about its anti-depressant Effexor, sending out a two-page letter to health care workers stating it may not be safe for pediatric use. This led to the FDA's reanalyzing data for Effexor and several other SSRIs and in October, the FDA issued an advisory citing similar findings for Celexa, Effexor, Prozac and Zoloft. In December, drug authorities in Britain banned SSRIs from use by children because of evidence that they can cause children to become suicidal.

The consistency of these findings suggests that perhaps the FDA should be taking actions that should have been taken long ago to curb adult use of SSRIs. Reports of a possible link between adult SSRIs and violence, including suicide, first appeared in 1990. In 1991, however, the FDA made a finding based on a highly selective set of data put together by Eli Lilly scientists, which concluded that Prozac did not cause suicide and was safe.

Since that time, SSRI makers have dismissed all allegations that the drugs cause violence and suicide by citing the FDA's report, a report that looks especially dubious in light of concerns over giving these drugs to children.

Meanwhile, incidents of extreme mental agitation involving SSRIs have not abated. In May 2001, for example, Australian David Hawkins strangled his wife and then attempted to kill himself after taking Zoloft. In a similar case, a jury found that Paxil caused sixty-year-old Donald Schell to shoot to death his wife, his adult daughter and granddaughter, and ultimately to kill himself. Like Hawkins, he had no history of violence of any kind.

These and other civil actions have given plaintiffs' lawyers

access to private company archives, where they have found a variety of unpublished studies, including many from the 1980s, confirming a link between SSRI agitation and violence. In one study, conducted by Pfizer in the 1980s, many healthy female volunteers given either Zoloft or a placebo began complaining of problems of agitation and apprehension. Twenty-five percent of individuals, all GSK employees, experienced agitation after taking Paxil.

Instead of at least warning physicians of a risk of drug-induced agitation, SSRI makers continue to insist that the violence linked to SSRI use is the product of the "illness" the drug is said to treat. In many instances of SSRI-related violence, however, the drugs were prescribed not for clinical depression, but only as an adjunct treatment for other health problems, such as back pain. Diane Cassidy, for example, was prescribed Prozac not for depression, but for "off label" use as a weight-loss drug. Today as a result, she is paralyzed on one side of her body and suffers from significant cognitive impairment.

SSRI makers, it seems, have embraced the well-tested tobacco company tactic of denial, denial, denial! All that they have conceded to date is that whatever serious side effects might occur in some small percentage of SSRI users, millions of others have been helped by them. But even this concession is misleading. The real question is whether SSRIs are better than non-SSRI antidepressants, including those they have come to replace, namely tricyclics like Franyl and Elavil. SSRIs have not been clinically proven to be more effective or safer than these older, less-expensive antidepressants. Although tricyclics do have greater toxicity when taken in overdose, they do not pose the risk of severe mental agitation and violence seen with SSRIs. Nor do they cause withdrawal symptoms or lowered libido.

What has become clear is that the SSRIs should not be the first line of pharmacological treatment for depression, as the London Times reported on October 20th. The over-prescribing of antidepressants has grown to alarming proportions since the dawn of Prozac, and British drug authorities recently concluded physicians should not be prescribing antidepressants for normal problems of life.

Yes, billions of dollars of revenue are at stake in the selling of SSRIs. Zoloft, Paxil, and Prozac collectively brought in more than six billion in gross sales in 2003. That may explain the failure of the FDA to act, but it certainly cannot justify it when the public's health is at stake.

Fast-forward to March, 2004. The FDA has stepped in and ordered pharmaceutical companies to label psych meds, a victory for all, to expose the dangers they pose, in which the greedy corporate structure has suppressed for decades so they can worship the mighty dollar. Keep hope alive.

My Lil' Dad

Figure it out for yourself, my lad
You're all the greatest of men have had
Arms to raise
Hands to praise
Legs to move
Eyes to groove
And a brain to use
If you would only choose
With this equipment they all began
Do you understand?
Do start from the top and say, "I can"
Clear the path
Drop a plan
Peep over your shoulder
The wise and the great
They take their food from a common plate
Similar knives and forks
They use
With similar laces
They tie their shoes
The world considers them
Brave and smart
But you have all they had
When they made their start
You can be great if you only will
You're well-equipped
Don't trip
Get a grip

Remember you have arms, hands, legs and a brain to use

It's on you to choose
And the One who has risen
With great deeds to do
Began His life
With no more than you
You are the handicap you must face
So lost without a trace
Will you ever find your place?
Your silent voice is heard
By how much you study
No, no, no you ain't no dummy
Where do you want to go?
You better let your light show
It's on you what you want to be
Truth be told, you know what they eye cannot see
Rise on up from the ashes of despair
Common folks on welfare
Go ahead and make that decision
Hold on to your vision
Listen to the beat within
Furnish the will to win
Find some courage
Dig deep inside
That's where the future will reside
So figure it out for yourself, my lad
You were born with all that the great have had
With your equipment they all began
Put it down and say, "I can!"

BRANDON MARTINEZ (cont.)

Praying Fo' Me

Ooh, heavenly Father, Mary's baby child
I'm callin' on you, because my life is in disarray
I want to stop and think
But every time I blink
I stutter for the words to say
I don't even know how to pray
Don't trip, it's all good
Just believe in your heart
That's a start
Lord, I don't want to be labeled as weak
A holy roller, a Christian freak
What should I do? Who shall I seek?
My friends are all hardcore
Almost every day somethin' pops off and starts a new war
Someone goes out in a so-called blaze of glory
Never to return to tell their story
It's the only time we make the breaking news
When our heads are held low, we singin' the blues
Ever since I was a child
Been runnin' wild
Since I was a kid
Had no concern
For what we did
I'm so scared
I shake and shiver inside
How much longer
Will I be alive?
To stand upright on my two feet
All by myself
I won't go out
Back down and retreat
Sometimes I'll read a psalm or two
An undercover Christian
I'll close the door
Stay locked up in my room
I fight the smile
As it begins to emerge and bloom
It keeps me sane, provides some relief
Straight tired of all this grief
But I won't tell no one of my secret meetings
Soon I'll have to go out and participate in the beatings
Senseless acts of violence is on my daily agenda
I don't know, maybe someday I'll surrenda
Lord, would you still be there, even in my world of sin?
Kickin' it on the street corner
Sippin' on some gin
Lord, don't you hear me callin'?
Can't you hear my scream?
That's me down here
Mean muggin', mean
With my pants saggin'
'Do raggin'
Hand on my glock
Ready to pull the trigger
Pop, pop, pop
Until them fools drop
Please, Lord, I need you to keep me safe
I did good today; saw that movie "Passion"
Now I know about everlastin'
But my favorite Christian movie is "Fighting Temptations"
I'll keep it real, Lord
I only went to see it because of Beyonce.
It turned out to be a blessing in disguise
Aren't you proud of your child?
I'm starting to get tame
I must confess I'm much more mild
I know these ain't my friends
But I can't starve; I must make my ends
It's kind of funny, Lord
One day they holla "Hosanna"
The next day they yelling "Crucify"
Why I got to be caught up
In dis way of livin'?
No one got no heart
Ain't thinkin' about givin'

So much hate and gore
Lord, please let me in, open on up
I'm knockin' on heaven's door
I feel so empty inside
Chasin' a Mr. Feelgood feelin'
The females get attracted while I be dealin'
I'm a damn fool
Some say I'm vicious and cruel
Roamin' the streets, it's cool
I can't lie,
But often when I'm all alone
I do cry
That's the truth
I think you said in the Bible
It would set me free
If I would only listen to their plea
I'm sorry, Lord, I can't quote no big fancy verses verbatim
Just do something about these curses
I got no one to turn to
What must I do?
What shall I pursue?
I got to go, Lord, and get dressed for battle
Hop on my horse
Giddy on up on my saddle
Just a youngsta on a mission, havin' fun,
Give a damn about being on the run
Before I go, Father, do you got anything to say?
Yes, I'm God, I got all the power
No matter what time, late in the midnight hour
When you walk the floor
I'm there
Trust me, I do care
Just continue to pray
Just believe
And when you perceive
It right
You will receive
It right
What grows in your mind
Grows in time
Yes, those are my words
Choose this day who you will serve
It's okay
I accept you the way you are
You, my lil' sheep, will not stray too far
I got you covered under my wings
Protection is assured
In every direction
Even though you got one foot in and one foot out
Tell me, what's that all about?
I won't trip, because we've all fallen short and slipped
It's all good
In the 'hood
I love all my children
There is no one above the other
You're all equal in my sight
As the gunshots ring out through the night
The prominent member of secular society
Homeless pauper alike
Will have to go through
The same playa hata as the next man
Livin' it up all grand
Are you listening? Do you understand?
Live your life to the fullest
Don't get arrogant and get off track
Remember who runs the show
I'll provide some room for margin of error
But it saddens me
Too many youngsters line up as a pallbearer
When you hear the bells ringin'
When you hear the chu-chu train comin'
When you have to climb aboard your Gospel train
Oooh, I hope your life won't be lived in vain
It's a damn shame
How many I must turn away
All because you lived your life vicariously

BRANDON MARTINEZ (cont.)

continued from previous page

Blinded by the light
In which you could not see
Have courage, have no fear
I am your deity
Surely I will have mercy and pity
Keep me in first place in your heart
Wherever you go, whatever you do
Will not fall apart
I got you hedged in all around
You was once lost, but now you're found
In the pigpen was your palace
Kickin' it wit' da homies
Getting into much malice
Some call you the prodigal son
Some say your life is done
But you know what?
It has just begun
Trials come to keep us strong
Forget the past and what you did wrong
No matter what, Lil' One
Keep your song
Sing your lil' tune
Do your lil' dance
What I started I will finish

I am the beginning and the end
When you got no one else left
I'll be your friend
My word sent out will come back true
When you throw up your hands
And say, "I'm through!"
Never will my words come back void
I'll come running down
Hitch a ride on an asteroid
Rescue you in the time of trouble
That's me, up here
My light shines through the bubble
I created all this you see in the sky
I call the shots when you will die
My plans are to prosper you if you would get in line
Come on; make up your mind
Now's the time
Don't worry; I'll intervene
Just promise me you'll hold on to your dream
Until I hear you call me once again
Keep the faith!
Happy Easter, Lil' Salena. Happy Easter, Gina. Happy Easter,
Momma . . .

Election Year Blues

America, the red, white and blue
America, what the hell is wrong with you?
Bush, you said there were weapons of mass destruction
Sounds like a bunch of lies and corruption
Sending our youngster to war
As more troops deploy to Iraq
Get real, get ready
Soon they'll come under attack
The death toll rises to 600
It's not just a number
These are real people
With real people left behind
All because you thought you had it right in your mind
Sounds to me like you held a grudge
A decision based on your ego, you would not budge
I know you weren't led by your spirit
Yeah, yeah, yeah, you don't want to hear it
Was it really about Saddam Hussein?
Or your father's legacy put to shame?
It's personal, to finish what he started
Yes, he did try to assassinate your father
Why get caught up? Why even bother?
Was it worth your political career
That you held so precious, so dear?
No one could have predicted 9/11
You handled our nation well when we needed you most
Us grieving from coast to coast
But now that election year rolls around
Some say that your ads exploit the dead
Surely there must be another way to get some exposure
It's bad enough their loved ones are barely finding closure
Let's not relive what happened on that fateful day
Find another way
To get some votes
I don't know
Is it just me?
But why is it when the axe falls
It always falls on a minority
They're starting to question your integrity
You use Condoleezza Rice as a scapegoat
Feed her to the gators; throw her in a moat
Because she came from the 'hood of Birmingham
I heard that
You don't give a damn
Whatever will further your political aspirations
Whoever that is within reach will do
What's wrong? Scared they might impeach you?
As Condoleezza Rice breaks the code of silence

Forced to go out on front street
They'll be no turning back
She cannot retreat
Sacrifice who you will, suppress the truth all you want
The clock is tickin'; don't get caught
Slippin'
You must hand over the reigns of government to a sovereign nation
June 30th is the deadline
You're running out of time
Shall we push up the date a notch?
As more casualties go down in a grave
We shake our heads in disgust
Stand by to watch
Former White House terrorism advisor Richard Clarke says
You own America an apology
Could 9/11 have been prevented?
Perhaps if you would not have relented
Been hot on the trail of Al Queda
You have the unmitigated gall
To declare you created
More jobs on your campaign tour
Prepare for Condoleezza
To be questioned on your dire
How does a five trillion surplus go to a five trillion deficit?
In the process destroying three million jobs?
Lies, lies, lies in Iraq
A trigger-happy president
Who believes in an eye for an eye
A tooth for a tooth
Why don't you keep it real?
Stand up and tell the truth?
That would be politically incorrect
Well, I got somethin' tha won't give you a reprieve
A lil' somethin' up my sleeve
A poll conducted by the Consumer Confidence Survey
Should ruffle your feathers in disarray
38% approve of your decision to go to war
50% disapproved of your decision
But the most fascinating number
It sure does make me wonder
48% of the public doesn't believe anything you say
Vietnam, "No I didn't," "Yes I did"
You don't like it
Write your own poem
After the elections you'll be voted out of office
That is my hope; that is my premonition
No more going to war, stockpilin' ammunition
Peace is what we need
Peace in the land, peace for you, peace for me
Peace someday we will live to see . . .

DENNIS R. SHADLE

The following is a short note and a couple of poems from first-time Beat contributor Dennis R. Shadle. As he writes, The Beat has become hot property among Dennis and his peers at Vacaville. We thank Dennis for his contributions (and his stamps — but don't trip, we'll pay for postage), and we look forward to hearing from him again soon.

Dear Beat

Thank you so much for your response to my letter and sending me a copy of The Beat Within. Everyone loves it here and every day someone comes up and ask to borrow it so they can read it. Be assured I share it with everyone.

I would like to respectfully ask to continue to receive it as in 2 1/2 years here, I have never seen one! I do not have money, but I do have some stamps! I am enclosing some so that it hopefully helps.

I will continue to try to send you stamps to cover my subscription whenever I can.

Also enclosed are a couple of writings that you might enjoy. They come from a Native American standpoint.

Again thanks.

The Letter

A letter is the warmest way
To show a friend the time of day
A keep in touch that brings a smile
Across the very longest mile
What a wealth of strength and hope
Is always tucked in an envelope
Reminding your loved one that you are
At least in heart, not so very far
There's no country, state, or camp
That's too far for a postage stamp
For memories that will never age
Are written down upon each page
Although it's nice to telephone
Some of the sweetest pleasures known
Are moments shared in thoughts we send
That can be read, smelled, slept with, and then read again!

Struggle

I struggle daily to retain a semblance of humanity
A human being to remain immersed in such insanity
I'm crowded into loneliness by monosyllabic replies
From men with only emptiness reflected in hollow eyes.
Entrenched in a reality where innocence is out of place
Where virtue is venality and violence a saving grace
I justify the violence as necessity to survive
Yet, is it only defensive or for some pleasure I derive?
There is a savage pride that only is a man to know
When death or injury defied stands before a vanquished foe
Each day I remind myself a gentle world beyond this lies
So, in my heart I seek to find the qualities that once I prized
To turn away the rabid beast, which feeds upon my tortured soul
I seek the strength that once released will ease my pain and make me whole.

**Each day
I remind
myself a
gentle world
beyond
this lies**

BLACK 'N' MILD

The man that created the Reverend Run and Jay-Z covers of our recent Beat issues is not only an incredible artist, but he's also an innovative lyricist. Wounded by a woman in a relationship, he drops his pain on paper, going through the list of items that tore his relationship apart. Love gone wrong is something that hurts us all, and we're sure many of you will recognize the feelings behind this poem. Black 'n' Mild writes to us from CYA / Dewitt-Nelson.

A Disease

I have contracted this disease
That has ripped my heart from my chest,
And hung it on my sleeve.
It's hard to breathe,
I believe it's best that I leave.
Why must she scream?
Let me go, don't you see the need to separate.
My thoughts must elevate,
Leaving your tyrannical thinking to levitate.
Why must she animate?
Drawing conclusions that aren't true,
Raining on my sunshine, turning the skies gray,
Crying 'cause they aren't blue.
I won't take loose lips, battles usually tend to sink ships.

Weak men tend to fall victim to the seduction of thick hips.
This relationship was never based on love,
It was built on conveniently free lust.
You were at first deceived by a strategically regal thug.
Illegal drugs far surpassed meager funds.
Trees and blunts, and wings full of lethal buds.
I loved you a lot, gave you more,
But your past relationship left you sore.
He deserved an academy award
How he played his role, sexed your brain
Before sprinting for the door.
Where you were once rich with warm giving love
Your heart and soul is now cold and poor.
One man's actions dwindled your passions,
I'm not going to deal with this disease anymore.

MAURICIO FUNES Queremos darle las bienvenidas a Mauricio Funes otra vez al Beat Without. El nos ha tocado desde la prisión de Pelican Bay. No se deja vencer en pasar la vos con sus palabras tan fuertes, siento otro vividor. Esta vez tomó tiempo para escribirnos sobre su amigo, quien no pudo contar con su ayuda, y terminó cometiendo suicidio. Estamos muy agradecido de tenerlo como avisador y como amigo. Queremos que sepa que también somos su amigo, y que el puede contar con nosotros todo el tiempo.

We once again welcome Mauricio Funes to The Beat Without. He reaches out to us all from Pelican Bay Prison. He doesn't let the fact that he is a lifer stop him from reaching out to others through his strong writings. This time he took some of his time to write us about a friend who couldn't count on his help and committed suicide. We are very glad to have him as an advisor and a friend. We want him to know that we are his friend as well, and that he can count on us all the time.

Mi Amigo

Una vez, yo tube un gran amigo,
Se murió y no pudo contar conmigo.
Tubo que estar muy desesperado,
Y tener mucho valor para haberse ahorcado.
Lo hizo con una cuerda,
Sin que su madre y amigos se dieran cuenta.
Me pregunto que habrá pasado por la mente para cometer
esa locura.
Ya que cuando uno muere ya no hay cura.
¿Será que era su hora para dejarnos
Y para nosotros conformarnos?
¿Será que se fue ante de su tiempo
Y es por eso que le recordamos después de
Tanto tiempo?
No sé cual fue su gran aflicción,
Pero si sé, cual fue nuestra gran preocupación.
Talvez como amigo no haya cumplido,
Y es por eso que hoy se encuentra dormido.
Espero algún día poder encotrnarnos,
Para poder abrazarlo y estrechar sus manos.
Se fue sin decir adios
e irse a sentar enfrente de Dios.
Que el esté bien acompañado,
Porque hay mucho que lo hemos añorado.
Que Dios tenga en su gloria a mi amigo,
Porque aqui en la tierra conseva a un gran amigo.

My Friend

One time, I had a great friend
He died and couldn't count on me
He had to be so desperate
And courageous to hang himself
He did it with a rope
Without letting his mother and friends know.
I ask myself, what would have gone through his mind to
make him commit such a stupid act?
Knowing that when one dies, there's no cure.
Could it be that it was time for him to leave us
And for us to resign ourselves to his loss?
Could it be that he left before his final hour
And that's the reason why we still remember him
After so long?
I don't know what his huge affliction could have been.
Maybe, on my part, I didn't do my duty as a friend
And that's why he remains sleeping.
I hope to meet him again someday,
And be able to hug him and shake his hands.
He left without saying good-bye
And sits in front of God.
I hope he is well attended,
Because there are a lot of us who miss him.
May God have my friend in his glory.
In this world, he has a good friend.

JOSE Jose, aka Negro, was once a Beat participant in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. He now writes to us from The Boys Republic in Chino Hills. In the following piece he speaks about the perils of gangbanging. We only hope that one day he will practice what he preaches, 'cause the youngstas out there won't do as you say, but as you do. The best teacher is one who follows his own advice.

Gangbangers

Gangbanging'. Is that the life that anyone wants to live? No it's not, because if you bang — if you're a Norteño or a Sureño — you won't amount to nothing in life because you either dead, in prison or if you're lucky, you're out but your mostly six feet underground.

The reason why I'm saying this is because I bang. My lil' carnal bangs and I hate that he does, but he wanted to be like me, his older bro. I can't choose his lifestyle but I can give him advice on gangs. But the thing that I want is that I just can't wait till I get out of here so I can be an older brother to him and give him something my father never gave him.

Well, it's hard for me to get along with peers down here because I'm from somewhere else and I'm affiliated with another gang. I'm the opposite. I'm not saying that I'm going to stop bangin', I'm just saying to all you youngsters out there trying to get renown and trying to be cool just because you want to start bangin', it's not the life for you or me, but I was raised into it and I just can't stop. I didn't wake up one morning and say to myself "I want to start bangin'," because I'm me and nobody else. But for all you that do bang and are locked up you can change anything if you put your mind to it

— it can happen.

I'm locked up because of bangin'. I caught the next man's case but I dealt with it. I got charged with attempted murder and to me that ain't nothin' to be proud of. When you bang you are always vigilant all the damn time. You always have to watch your back just in case your rival creeps up on you. But I lost some of my familia because of gangs and believe me — it ain't no joke. It really hurts to lose a loved one, it had me, "a gangsta," breakin' up in tears when my older carnal went and murdered a rival in the streets of San Jose and got snatched on and now he's facing 83 years without parole in the state penitentiary. What can I say — he was doing it for "the cause."

Gangs ain't what it seems to be. You can get killed over some dumb shhh, I'm just letting you know don't do this dumb shhh because I'm from San Jose and I'm always going to be a gangsta through thick and thin and no matter where we are at, we are gangbangers but I and my familia will show you that we can accomplish the impossible because we have faith in us and in every one of you out there that are not doing time. So as I leave this letra or writing to you and The Beat, stay strong and don't do something that will mess up your life or your familia's life. Just get your education and show the world that you are better than me, you don't want to be locked up and in and out of the system like I was when I was locked up in the Ranch or Camp. Just reach for the stars and accomplish your goals, to stay on top of the game and make your moms proud.

Gone for now but never forever. Until I write back — push,

RICKY OREGO Queremos darles las bienvenidas a Ricky Oregon quien nos escribe desde Pelican Bay Prison. El nos escribe dos pedazos importante, uno de esas escritura se la dedicó a su madre y la otra a ustedes para que pudieran ver la verdadera person que toma lugar adentro de uno, al mirarse en un espejo. Esperamos que nos siga escribiendo porque sus palabras significan mucho para nosotros. Queremos agradecerle por su tiempo y su esfuerzo que ha hecho por

nosotros.

We want to welcome Ricky Oregon, who writes us from Pelican Bay Prison. He wrote us two important pieces — one for his mother, and the other one for you, written so you can meet the true person within yourself when you look into the mirror. We hope he continues to write us, because his words do mean a lot to us. We want to thank him for his time and effort.



Para Mi Madre

Para la autora de mi vida . . .

No encuentro las palabras adecuada para decirle cuanto la quiero. Hay joyas y piedras muy preciosas pero ni con la belleza de ellas yo la podría comparar. Muy grande es su amor por mí . . . Los recuerdos de mi infancia y hasta este momento le ha brindado amor y felicidad a mi alma. Ella es un amor puro divino, sincero y celestial.

Madre mía, gracias por la felicidad que hay en mi vida. Gracias por tus consejos.

Madre mía, gracias por todas las cosas que hoy miro en la vida, amada y adorable madre, querida. Deseo todo lo mejor de la vida para usted y que Dios me la cuide y bendiga.

For My Mother

To the author of my life . . .

I can't find the right words to tell you that I love you. There are jewelry and stones that are very precious, but not even with their beauty could I compare them to her. Her love for me is huge . . . the memories from my childhood and from the present have brought love and happiness to my soul. Her love is pure, divine, and celestial.

Mother, thank you for the happiness that there is in my life. Thank you for your advice. Mother, thank you for all the things I see in my life, lovely and adorable mother. I wish the best for you, and may God bless you and take care of you.

Tu Espejo

Cuando obtengas lo que quieras en tu lucha por ganancias y el mundo te haga rey por un día . . . Simplemente ve al espejo, mírate y ve lo que el hombre enfrente tiene que decirte.

No se trata de tu padre, tu madre, o esposa por cuyo oficio debes tratar. El veredicto de quien más cuenta en tu vida es de quien te estes mirando en el espejo. El es a quien debes sastifacer más que a todos los demás, porqueque él está contigo hasta el final.

Habrás pasado el examen más difícil si el hombre del espejo llega a ser tu amigo. Tú puedes ser aquel el de la suerte, entonces piensa que eres alguien maravilloso. Pero el hombre del espejo dice que sólo eres un famfarron si no puedes mirarlo directo a los ojos. Puedes burlarte de todo el mundo a lo largo de los años y obtener, palmadas en la espalda al pasar. Pero tu premio final sera ataques

Your Mirror

When you get what you want from your struggle to come up, and the world makes you king for a day, simply look at yourself in the mirror and see what the man staring back at you has to say.

It has nothing to do with your father, your mother, or your wife who you are responsible for taking care of. The verdict on who counts the most in life is who you are looking at in the mirror. That person staring back at you is whom you should satisfy more than anyone else, because he is with you until the end.

You will pass the most difficult test if the man in the mirror eventually becomes your friend. You can be that person with the lucky touch, so think of yourself as being somebody marvelous. But the man in the mirror says that you're only a sucker if you can't see it before you.

You can laugh about everything in this world over the years and get slaps on your back for passing the test, but you could get heart attacks and tears if you play the man in the mirror, who, if you haven't figured it out already, is you.

**El es a quien debes
sastifacer más que
a todos los demás,
porqueque él está contigo
hasta el final.**

DESHAWN LAVENDAR

We welcome back the very talented Deshawn Lavendar for a second consecutive week with the following two poems. He writes from CSP-Susanville, sent us a series of deep poems, and we're proud to publish them here. His poems serve as a way for us to view the world through his eyes, if only for the time we take to read and trip off them. We look forward to receiving more from Deshawn soon.

**you were
my master
teacher
connecting
the dots
of our
philosophy.**



Sista Girl

Sista girl, you're the rarest
gift to all of mankind,
dazzling in a diamond cut drawing
admiration to your unique shine.
Melanin in your ebony complexion
exposes spiritual oneness to our universe,
redefined design of your body's curves
definitely is a blessing and not a curse.
Epicurean touch with soul
a full plate, black eyed peas and sweet potato pies,
neck bones, smothered potatoes, baking
isn't an option, soul food is fried.
Natural as the bluest skies resting
almighty over a mountain's peak,
supplying moisture to dry lands our
world needs your thunder to be complete.
Her character expresses vitality
seizing the moment of opportunity to expand,
protecting her clan, sensing the destruction of her man
she overstood this systematic plan.
Whole-heartedly managed to succeed in
raising full families on her own,
worked fingers to the bone
providing for your loving home.
All thee above I extend
with honor your due credibility,
undying dedication to our survival
deserving of my sincere respectability.
Sista girl, can you once again
share your intuitive dreams with me,
articulate divine wisdom bestowed upon thee
I'm craving your sense of reality.

Message

Missing your presence, momma
only the two of us,
bred beneath your golden wings
you were my source of trust.
Blessed in your image
rewarded with your height,
often painful knowing you're
not in my daily sight.
Days before our adversity
steps away from adding notches to the game,
marks of grace on the world's face
model agencies were seeking your name.
Possession of a rare beauty
shapely long legged female,
jealous when men gazed at you
my momma's love wasn't for sale.
As a very young boy
observing and learned through your vision,
our conditions added to
my course of decisions.
Telegraphed spiritual messages
deliberating on my untamed ideology,
you were my master teacher
connecting the dots of our philosophy.
Grief stricken forever mourning
tattooed a tear beneath my eye,
permanent as your disappearance
symbolizing how I feel inside.
Mom's, you're my first love
replaced only by a deeper overstanding,
your spirits stirs through me daily
feeling your guidance I'm beginning to
comprehend.

**A full plate,
black eyed peas
and sweet potato pies,
neck bones,
smothered potatoes,
baking
isn't an option,
soul food is fried.**

JOEY PEREZ In a previous issue of *The Beat*, we introduced you to Joey Perez — and he introduced us to life on San Quentin's Death Row! Now, he adds details of that life, the life of those we confine to our prison empire. In these remarkable poems, Joey shouts out the pride of

his humanity, which, though beaten down behind walls of poverty and prison, still shines through in these words. "Brick upon brick, buried alive" begins his poem, "In The Belly Of The Beast," as good a depiction of the deadening effects of prison as we've ever read in so few words.

You Try! You Fail!

Try as you might
To defeat me
To strip me of my pride
To rob me of my dignity
You try! You fail!

Time after time
You beat me down
You stand upon my hopes
You stand upon my dreams
You try! You fail!

What do you see
When you look at me?
Do you see a person?
Do you see a man?
Until you do
You will fail...

Look into my eyes
Deep into my soul
Look past the anger
Look beyond the rage
And see the fire
See why you fail!

Stress Reliever

Although we are isolated and mistreated
We are as never before more wise, the
Wiseman will use his time wisely to remold
His inner self, the ability to grow from within
Is a reality under present sub-human
Conditions —

emphasis I placed on one's personal
Goals within the general schooling of life.
When defeat takes over you don't spend all
Your time counting losses; save some of it
To look for your gains. You may find your
Gains are greater than your losses. Look
Further on down the line for surely
You'll see your loved ones, as they are
Most sincerely hoping to see you. Human
Faults are like garden weeds,
they grow without

Cultivation and soon take place if they
Aren't thinned out. When the going is hardest
Just keep on keeping on. You'll get there
Sooner than someone who finds the easy
Going.

Beware

Listen to me and the truth I tell
Of a bloody road and the men who fell.
All the signs were there without a doubt
With no more chances to figure them out.
But we can never go
back to change one thing
To right a wrong or take back any pain.
Still something within
compels us to speak out
In hope of reaching the few.

Beware of this dark and wicked thing
That has given justice its red stain
'Caused many governors to look insane
Step up! Step up! To the killing machine
Please don't wait to change until it's too late
And this is a fact we know
For this message is sent from hell to earth
By many on San Quentin's Death Row.

In The Belly Of The Beast

(With props to Jack Abbott)
Brick upon brick
Buried alive
Under the mountain
If you listen closely
You can hear them cry
Nobody missed them
Out of sight out of mind
Obscurity knows them well
In the belly of the beast
There is darkness
The cold touch of steel
The pale concrete walls
The dim yellow lights
The distant hollow threats
The quiet came when
There was nothing left to say
Then the walls closed in
There was nobody left to listen
A moment of madness
The price to pay
A sleeping giant

Society never looked
Justice was blind
As they said she should be
Deaf
Dumb
Lame
Month after month
Year after year
They don't count the days anymore
They don't feel the pain
Anymore
Is only a cliché
In the back of their mind
An eyesore
As they try to rebuild
What they once knew well
Things they took for granted
Life
In the belly of the beast
There is darkness
Brick upon brick
Under the mountain
If you listen closely
You can hear them cry
Never say never
Never say goodbye

My Last Word

Razor wire fence,
I'm held in suspense,
Surrounded by concrete and steel,
Held to surrender to their will.

Premeditated hate,
I await my fate,
And one day I will
Face an execution date.

Step off in a room...
I will feel the doom,
Strapped to a table,
Completely unable.

My last words will be heard,
I will speak them loud
And hold my head proud,
And then I will say:

An eye for an eye
And a tooth for a tooth,
But I'm here to share...
To share the truth

For this is what
It's all about,
And I know this
Without a doubt.

An eye for an eye,
America will cry,
But I'm here to say
That that's a lie.

For a rich man will get off,

And a poor man will die,
And that we can't deny,
Nor can we justify.

Worst of the worst,
Maybe so,
For it was a lawyer that
Put me here on death row.

Assigned by the state
To determine my fate.

And I knew
At first glance,
That I didn't stand
Any kind of a chance.

A Fate Worse Than Death
Life goes on beyond these walls,
It's din as inaudible as dreams.

A thousand arms reach out to me,
Grappling and straining without success.

Familiar voices preserved inside pockets of
memory,
Faded like distant stars in the blazing dawn.

All that remains is my own voice,
Now strangely alien to my ears.

A conscious coma is my condition,
My disembodied soul can only watch.

While most await the end of days,
I await the end of nights.

When I look out my window,
I wish I wasn't in this damn
place, man. Every day I wake
up in a box and know this is not
the place for me. Jail ain't no
place for anybody. Everybody
talks about kids being wild
and people coming out of jail
are wild, but if they were
forced to do some time – they
will know why.

check out the rest of Dion's POW on 4

